REFERENCE BOOK

GAZETTEER OF INDIA

WEST BENGAL

WEST DINAJPUR

WEST BENGAL DISTRICT GAZETTEERS

WEST DINĀJPUR

By

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PREFACE

It was decided at a meeting which was held on the 2nd July, 1955, at the instance of the Ministry of Education, Government of India, that the Imperial and the District Gazetteers should be revised. An Expert Committee was appointed to suggest the lines on which the revision was to be carried out. The Expert Committee met from the 8th to the 10th November, 1956, and submitted its recommendations about the manner in which the District Gazetteers should be revised. The Committee recommended that there should be a State Editor in every State for revising the District Gazetteers. The Government of West Bengal accepted the scheme in 1958 and I was appointed as the State Editor in May, 1959, in addition to my duties as the Superintendent of Census Operations, West Bengal and Sikkim. The work of revision of the District Gazetteers could not, however, be taken up immediately as preliminary administrative arrangements could not be finalised till 1960.

The District Gazetteer of West Dinājpur, now being published, is the revised version of the District Gazetteer of the undivided district of Dinājpur that was compiled by F. W. Strong of the Indian Civil Service and published in 1912. It is hardly necessary to state that the present volume relates to the district of West Dinājpur only and not to the former undivided district of Dinājpur which existed prior to the 15th August, 1947.

The present volume has been written in conformity with the pattern set for the revision of the District Gazetteers by the Government of India. The aim of the present volume is to present to the general reader an adequate and comprehensive picture of the district of West Dinājpur without going into details of a specialised nature. It will be for the reader to judge how far I have succeeded in achieving this object. The District Gazetteers of Bengal written in the first quarter of the present century, which are commonly known as the O'Malley series of Gazetteers, are the Gazetteers which are being revised under the present scheme adopted by the Government of India. The present volume was drafted by me in 1961-62 after which it was placed before the State Advisory Committee for the revision of the District Gazetteers and also before the Editor, Indian Gazetteers, and was given the final shape after effecting the amendments suggested by them. The book does not claim any originality, it being in the nature of a compilation. In drafting the various chapters I have freely consulted the standard works on the subject. Names of such standard works have been given in the bibliography published at the end of this volume. Moreover, certain chapters after being drafted were sent for scrutiny and comments to the officers of the departments stationed in the district and to the Departments at Writers' Buildings and the chapters were finalised in the lines of the comments made by them. The materials for this volume were collected mainly by Shri Amalendu Mookerjee, Assistant Editor, and it was left to me to decide how much of the materials so collected should be incorporated in the present volume. The responsibility for every statement made in this volume and the manner of compilation is therefore entirely mine. At some places I have taken the liberty of quoting certain passages verbatim from the District Gazetteer by F. W. Strong without the use of any quotation

mark because the present volume purports to be the revised version of Strong's Gazetteer in so far as the district of West Dinājpur is concerned. In this connection, the paragraph on Birds in the Section on Fauna in Chapter I of the book may be mentioned. The Section on Climate was written mainly on the basis of the note prepared by the India Meteorological Department. The chapter on History probably may appear to be rather disconnected to the reader, but as this volume relates to the district of West Dinājpur only, I had to exclude events which did not take place within the geographical limits of that district. In writing the chapter on the People I made use of the unpublished report on the survey of a village in the district conducted under the auspices of the Anthropological Survey of India. This was possible due to the generous permission granted by Professor N. K. Bose, the then Director of the Anthropological Survey of India, who is a member of the State Advisory Committee for the revision of the District Gazetteers.

The State Advisory Committee for the revision of the District Gazetteers was constituted as follows: (1) Shri B. Sarkar, I.C.S. (Retd.), Chairman, (2) Dr. S. B. Chaudhuri, M.A., Ph.D., Professor & Head of the Department of History, Burdwan University, (3) Prof. N. K. Bose, F.N.I., (4) Dr. Nalinaksha Datta, M.A., Ph.D., D.Litt., (5) Dr. Pratul Chandra Gupta, M.A., Ph.D. (London), Professor & Head of the Department of History, Jadavpur University, (6) The Editor, Indian Gazetteers, or his nominee and (7) The State Editor (Convener). I am grateful to the Chairman and the Members of the Committee for the suggestions which they made for the improvement of the book. I would like to place on record my debt to Dr. S. V. Desika Char, M.A., Ph.D. (London), who was for sometime Editor, Indian Gazetteers, for his valuable suggestions and comments. I am also grateful to Shri A. Niyogi, I.A.S., who was formerly Secretary, Home (C. & E.) Department and Shri S. Dutt-Mazumdar, I.A.S., the present Secretary, Home (C. & E.) Department for the help and cooperation extended by them in my task. My thanks are also due to Shri S. C. Sarkar, I.A.S., who was the District Magistrate, West Dinajpur, for the greater part of the period during which information relating to the district was collected, as also to the officers of the other departments of the State Government stationed in the district at that time. In writing the chapter on the People in this volume, I freely utilised the data which were at my disposal in my capacity of the Superintendent of Census Operations, West Bengal & Sikkim. I handed over charge of the office of the Superintendent of Census Operations in December, 1963, and I should thank Shri J. Dutta Gupta, W.B.C.S., the present Superintendent and Shri B. Roy, W.B.C.S., Deputy Superintendent, for their continued cooperation in checking the census data already used in this volume.

I would also like to place on record my indebtedness to all the members of the staff of the office of the State Editor, District Gazetteers for their wholehearted cooperation with me in my labours. I should like in particular to mention the names of Shri Dinen Kumar Som, Research Assistant, Sm. Subha Sen Gupta, Research Assistant, Shri Anil Krishna Majumdar, Stenographer, Shri Rathindra Kumar Palit, Publication Assistant and Shri Dhirendra Nath Dutta, Proof Reader.

I handed over charge of the office of the State Editor, District Gazetteers, West Bengal, on the 1st of June, 1964, and it is due to the continued interest taken by Shri Amalendu Mookerjee, Assistant Editor, and the members of

the staff mentioned above, that it has been possible to publish the book. In fact, but for the ungrudging help given by Shri Amalendu Mookerjee, it would not have been possible to publish this volume.

The management of Sree Saraswaty Press Limited are to be thanked for the speed and accuracy with which they have printed the book.

J. C. SENGUPTA
District Magistrate & Collector,
Midnapore

15th September, 1964
Midnapore

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23. The Superintendent of Police, West Dinajpur.
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28. Dr. P. G. Chowdhuri, Deputy Director of Health Services (Vital Statistics), West Bengal.
29. The Block Development Officer, Kaliaganj, West Dinajpur.
30. The District Fishery Officer, West Dinajpur.

* The respective postings of the Officers mentioned in this list have reference to the dates on which they furnished information for this Gazetteer or scrutinised the drafts of the different Sections.

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37. Shri S. N. Ghosh, Assistant Director of Fisheries, West Bengal.
38. The Chairman, Balurghat Municipality.
39. Shri T. C. Chatterjee, Executive Engineer, Malda Irrigation Division.
40. Shri Braja Bihari Roy Chowdhury, Chairman, District Board, West Dinajpur.
41. Dr. S. C. Ray, Adviser on Dairy Development and Animal Husbandry, West Bengal.
42. Shri P. K. Bose, Superintendent of Veterinary Services, Headquarters, Calcutta.
43. Shri G. Biswas, Assistant Registrar of Cooperative Societies, West Dinajpur.
44. Shri S. R. Roy, District Publicity Officer, West Dinajpur.
45. Dr. N. Ganguli, Deputy Director of Health Services (Insect Borne Diseases), West Bengal.
46. Dr. B. K. Das, Assistant Director of Health Services (School Health and Health Education), West Bengal.
47. Dr. A. B. Rudra, I.A.S., Inspector General of Prisons, West Bengal.
48. The Officer-in-charge, St. Joseph Charitable Dispensary, Rajibpur, West Dinajpur.
49. The Assistant Superintendent of Statistics, West Dinajpur
50. The Chief Inspector of Technical Education, West Bengal.
51. The Agent, State Bank of India, Balurghat.
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53. The Administrator, Raiganj Municipality.
54. The Director, State Statistical Bureau, West Bengal.
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57. Shri S. K. Bose, Commissioner of Commercial Taxes, West Bengal.
58. The District Industrial Officer, West Dinajpur.
59. The Divisional Forest Officer, Malda Division.
60. The Principal, Serampore College, Serampore.
61. Shri B. Maitra, Director, River Research Institute, West Bengal.
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86. The Chief Conservator of Forests, West Bengal.
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CHAPTER I

GENERAL

(a) INTRODUCTORY

The district of West Dinājpur came into existence in August, 1947, with the Partition of Bengal. The British, at the time they withdrew from India, ordered the Partition of India—one part being known as India and the other as Pakistan. The Province of Bengal came to be divided into two parts in accordance with this Partition. The dividing line passed through the district of Dinājpur, the portion lying to the west of the line being named West Dinājpur. There is no local tradition regarding the origin of the name Dinājpur, and it is also rather difficult to advance any satisfactory theory about the origin of the name. It is, however, not unreasonable to conjecture that the name Dinājpur is derived from the name of some local chieftain or king of the name of Dināj or Danuj. History mentions one Danuj Rāi of Sonārgāon, who helped Ghiyās-ud-din Balban in defeating Sultān Mughis-ud-din, but as his kingdom of Sonārgāon has been identified by an eminent historian like Sir Jadunath Sarkar with the tract of land near about the districts of Tipperā and Noākhāli in undivided Bengal, this Danuj Rāi probably did not give its name to Dinājpur. It is well known that Rājā Ganesh, the Hindu chieftain of North Bengal, became the king of Gaur in the early part of the fifteenth century A.D. He assumed the title of Danujamardana-deva, and it is not unlikely that the name Dinājpur is derived from the title of Rājā Ganesh.

Origin of the name of the district

Location, general boundaries, total area and population of the district.

The district of West Dinājpur lies between 26°29'54" and 25°10'55" north latitudes and between 89°0'30" and 87°48'37" east longitudes in the Jalpāiguri Division of West Bengal. It is bounded on the north by the river Mahānandā and the district of Dinājpur in East Pakistan; on the west by the district of Purneā in Bihar and by the district of Māldā; on the south by the district of Māldā and the districts of Rājshāhi and Bogrā in East Pakistan. It is bounded on the east by the districts of Dinājpur and Bogrā in East Pakistan. The eastern boundary has been formed in accordance with the Award of Sir Cyril Radcliffe. In accordance with the Award,

> "A line shall then be drawn from the point where the boundary between the thanas of Haripur and Raiganj in the district of Dinajpur meets the border of the Province of Bihar to the point where the boundary between the districts of 24-Parganas and Khulna meets the Bay of Bengal. This line shall follow the course indicated in the following paragraphs. . . . .

"The line shall run along the boundary between the following thanas:—

"Haripur and Raiganj; Haripur and Hemtabad; Ranisankail and Hemtabad; Pirganj and Hemtabad; Pirganj and Kaliaganj; Bochaganj and Kaliaganj; Biral and Kaliaganj; Biral and Kushmundi; Biral and Gangarampur; Dinajpur and Gangarampur; Dinajpur and Kumarganj; Chirirbandar and Kumarganj; Phulbari and Kumarganj; Phulbari and Balurghat.

"It shall terminate at the point where the boundary between Phulbari and Balurghat meets the north-south line of the Bengal-Assam Railway in the eastern corner of the thana of Balurghat. The line shall turn down the western edge of the railway lands belonging to that railway and follow that edge until it meets the boundary between the thanas of Balurghat and Panchbibi.

"From that point the line shall run along the boundary between the following thanas:—

"Balurghat and Panchbibi; Balurghat and Joypurhat; Balurghat and Dhamairhat; Tapan and Dhamairhat; Tapan and Patnitala; Tapan and Porsha; . . . . . ."

The eastern boundary described by Sir Cyril Radcliffe relates to the eastern boundary of the district of West Dinājpur as it existed before the implementation of the Bihar and West Bengal (Transfer of Territories) Act, 1956. On the 2nd November, 1956, the portion of the Purneā district received in pursuance of that Act, was merged into the district of West Dinājpur. The boundary of the district in the east, north of the Rāiganj police station, is thus the same as the eastern boundary of the district of Purneā in Bihar as it existed before the 1st November, 1956, in relation to East Pakistan.

The headquarters town of the district is Bālurghāt, that of Rāiganj sub-division is Rāiganj and that of Islāmpur sub-division is Islāmpur.

The total area of the district is 2,052 square miles (5,314.68 square kilometres). The length of the road from Hili to the bank of the Mahānandā at the northern boundary of the district is about 168 miles (about 270 km). It contained a population of 1,323,797 as ascertained during the 1961 Census.

The history of the district as an administrative unit, and the changes in its component parts.

It appears from a seal discovered amidst the ruins of Mahāsthāngarh in Bogrā district, East Pakistan, that Mahāsthāngarh was the ancient city of Puṇḍravardhana or Puṇḍranagara. The Maurya seal proves that this tract formed a part of the Maurya empire. On the evidence of the copper-plate inscriptions of Kumāra-gupta I and Budha-gupta found in Dāmodarpur in police station Phulbāri, now in East Pakistan, and the copper-plate found in the village Baigrām near Hili, it is reasonable to conclude that Puṇḍravardhana-*bhukti* of the Gupta empire included the district of Dinājpur. The Koṭivarsha mentioned in the Dāmodarpur copper-plate grants has been identified with Devkoṭ, which is now in police station

Gangārāmpur of the district of West Dinājpur. The Baigrām copper-plate grant refers to another *vishaya* called Pancha-nagari-*vishaya*. It is, therefore, reasonable to conclude that at least two *vishayas*, viz., Koṭivarsha-*vishaya* and Pancha-nagari-*vishaya* of Puṇḍravardhana-*bhukti* included parts of the district of West Dinājpur. The *vishaya*, which was a part of the *bhukti*, used to be governed by an official called *kumārāmātya* who used to be assisted in his work by a council. The district continued to form part of the Puṇḍravardhana-*bhukti* during the reign of the Pāla kings. In fact, Varendri which was situated in Puṇḍravardhana-*bhukti*, has been mentioned as the fatherland of the Pālas in an inscription of Mahipāla I. The Tapandighi copper-plate inscription of Lakshmanasena proves that the area which now comprises the district of West Dinājpur, formed a part of the Sena kingdom.

Muhammad Bakhtyār Khalji occupied Nadiā in 1201 A.D. and then pushed on to Gauḍa which was one of the capitals of the Senas at that time. Gaur-Lakhnāwati (Gauḍa-Lakshmanāvati)* became the capital also of the Khalji kings in the reign of Ghiyās-ud-din 'Iwaz Khalji, and the greater portion of the district of West Dinājpur formed a part of the Khalji kingdom in Bengal. Devkoṭ was the capital till 1220 A.D. after which it remained a military post. It is, however, difficult to say whether the kingdom of the Khaljis extended up to the northern boundary of the present district of West Dinājpur. During Akbar's reign West Dinājpur probably formed a part of the *sarkār* of Tājpur. It appears from the *Siyar-ul-mutākharin* that Bengal was divided into ten districts, each under a *faujdār*. Dinājpur was not one of the ten districts, and it is difficult to say the *faujdār* of which place exercised jurisdiction over it.

It appears from the list of districts which constituted the *Diwāni* portion as given by James Grant, that Dinājpur was one of the twenty-four districts into which the *Diwāni* portion was divided. In 1769 Mr. H. Cottrell was appointed as Supravisor for supervising the collection of revenue in the district. Dinājpur was the headquarters of one of the five Provincial Councils which were set up in 1773. By the Regulation of 1780, a *Mufassal Diwāni Ādālat* was established at Tājpur. The jurisdiction of this *Mufassal Diwāni Ādālat* extended over the district of Hāveli Pinjerāh or Dinājpur, part of Purneā, part of Rājshāhi and whole of Māldā district. The presiding officer of the Court was designated Judge.

Dinājpur, as represented in Major Rennell's map, consisted entirely of the large estate which belonged to the Rājā of Dinājpur and was contained within about three to four thousand sq. miles (eight to ten thousand sq. km). Since that time the district of Dinājpur underwent many changes in its

* As is the usual practice, Gauḍa is spelt as Gaur, and Lakshmanāvati as Lakhnāwati whenever the names occur in connection with the history of the Muslim period.

boundary. In 1905, Dinājpur was included in the new province of Eastern Bengal and Assam. In 1912, it became again a district of Bengal. It ultimately ceased to exist in August, 1947, when it was divided into two parts in accordance with the Award of Sir Cyril Radcliffe. The eastern boundary as indicated in the Award has not changed, but the western and northern boundaries have undergone several changes since August, 1947. In pursuance of the provisions of the Bihar and West Bengal (Transfer of Territories) Act of 1956, some areas of Purneā district of Bihar were transferred to West Bengal. Initially the entire area was included in the district of Dārjeeling by Notification No. 3858 G.A. dated 1.11.56. On 2.11.56 the area was made a part of the district of West Dinājpur by Notification No. 3875 G.A. By Notification No. 1176 G.A. dated 20.3.59 that portion of the area which lies to the north of the river Mahānandā was transferred to the district of Dārjeeling thus giving the district its present boundaries.

The new police station of Hili was constituted by Notification No. 1150 Pl. dated the 8th May, 1948. The district of West Dinājpur was formally constituted by Notification No. 548 G.A. dated 23.2.48 and it consisted of the police stations of (1) Bālurghāt, (2) Kumārganj, (3) Gangārāmpur, (4) Tapan, (5) Rāiganj, (6) Hemtābād, (7) Bangshihāri, (8) Kushmandi, (9) Kāliāganj and (10) Itāhār. Notification No. 2139 G.A. dated 14.7.48 formed Rāiganj sub-division with the police stations of (1) Rāiganj, (2) Hemtābād, (3) Bangshihāri, (4) Kushmandi, (5) Kāliāganj and (6) Itāhār. At that time the district consisted of two sub-divisions—(1) the Sadar sub-division and (2) the sub-division of Rāiganj. Consequent on the acquisition of some territories from the Purneā district of Bihar, an additional sub-division of Islāmpur was created. At present there are the following three sub-divisions in the district:

Sub-divisions and thanas.—Blocks, Panchayats.

(i) The Sadar sub-division consisting of the police stations of (1) Hili, (2) Bālurghāt, (3) Kumārganj, (4) Gangārāmpur and (5) Tapan;

(ii) The sub-division of Rāiganj consisting of the police stations of (1) Rāiganj, (2) Hemtābād, (3) Kāliāganj, (4) Itāhār, (5) Bangshihāri and (6) Kushmandi; and

(iii) The sub-division of Islāmpur consisting of the police stations of (1) Choprā, (2) Karandighi, (3) Islāmpur and (4) Goālpokhar.

Notification No. 1392 Pl. dated 17.2.43 transferred J.L. No. 185 and Nos. 187-211 of police station Kāliāganj to police station Rāiganj. Of the territory that came to the district from the district of Purneā, those portions which formerly belonged to the police stations of Thākurganj and Choprā in the Kishanganj sub-division of Purneā district, were constituted as a police station under the name of Choprā

police station by Notification No. 3859 G.A. dated 1.11.56. Notification No. 3860 G.A. dated 1.11.56 similarly constituted the police station of Islāmpur with those areas which used to form a part of the police station of Islāmpur in Kishanganj sub-division. Notification No. 3861 G.A. constituted the police station of Goālpokhar with the areas which had formed the former police station of Goālpokhar and part of the police station of Kishanganj in the Kishanganj sub-division of the Purneā district. By Notification No. 3862 G.A. that part of the former Karandighi police station in the Kātihār sub-division of the Purneā district, which had been ceded to West Bengal, was constituted into the new police station of Karandighi in the Islāmpur sub-division.

At present there are 16 Development Blocks, of which 6 are Stage I Blocks, 3 Stage II Blocks and 7 Pre-extension Blocks. There are at present 37 Anchal Panchāyats and 243 Grām Panchāyats in the district, besides the 88 Tahsil Panchāyat Circles and 36 Grām Panchāyats existing in Islāmpur sub-division under the Bihar Panchayat Raj Act, 1947.

The names of the Development Blocks are—(1) Rāiganj Stage II Block, (2) Itāhār Stage I Block, (3) Hemtābād Stage II Block, (4) Kāliāganj Stage II Block, (5) Gangārāmpur Stage I Block, (6) Kumārganj Stage I Block, (7) Tapan Stage I Block, (8) Islāmpur Stage I Block, (9) Karandighi Stage I Block, (10) Kushmandi Pre-extension Block, (11) Bangshihāri Pre-extension Block, (12) Bālurghāt Pre-extension Block, (13) Hili Pre-extension Block, (14) Choprā Pre-extension Block, (15) Goālpokhar I Pre-extension Block and (16) Goālpokhar II Pre-extension Block.

There were formerly Union Boards in the district (excluding the portion transferred from Purneā). Of these, there are now 59,—31 in Bālurghāt sub-division and 28 in Rāiganj sub-division. The West Bengal Panchayat Act (I of 1957) has come into force in parts of the district, and 10 Anchal Panchāyats and 62 Grām Panchāyats have been established in Gangārāmpur police station. 9 Anchal Panchāyats and 69 Grām Panchāyats in Kāliāganj police station, 13 Anchal Panchāyats and 85 Grām Panchāyats in Rāiganj police station and 5 Anchal Panchāyats and 27 Grām Panchāyats in Hemtābād police station.

In the sub-division of Islāmpur, the Bihar Panchayat Raj Act, 1947, is in force. The total number of Grām Panchāyats in that sub-division is 36.

(b) TOPOGRAPHY

Natural divisions; Elevation, configuration, etc.

The district is rather peculiar in shape. The tract of land between the Mahānandā in the north and the boundary of the Rāiganj police station in the south, is between sixty and seventy miles (ninety-seven and one hundred thirteen km)

long, but its width rarely exceeds ten miles (sixteen km) at any point. This corridor is linked with the rest of the district through the Rāiganj police station. The greatest distance between the north-western boundary of Rāiganj police station and the south-eastern boundary of the Hili police station is approximately seventy miles (about one hundred thirteen km). The greatest width of the district is approximately thirty-five miles (about fifty-six km).

The general appearance of the country is flat, sloping gently southwards, as is shown by the trend of the rivers. In the south and portions of the west of the district, the curious formation known as the *bārind*, geologically classed as old alluvium, makes its appearance. The characteristic of this is an undulating country interspersed with ravines. The elevations are nowhere worthy of the name of hills, the highest ridge not exceeding one hundred feet (about thirty metres) but they make nevertheless a considerable alteration in the appearance of the country, which elsewhere consists of the flat alluvial plain, characteristic of the Gangetic delta. The ravines vary from shallow stretches of low land, suitable for growing rice, to deeper depressions bearing a resemblance to old riverbeds and sometimes containing water. These latter are locally called *khāris*. The ridges are commonly covered with scrub jungle and stunted trees.

Another marked feature of the district are the tanks, especially numerous in the south. These vary in size from splendid stretches of water, which might justly be called lakes or meres, to small and insignificant ponds. There is also a number of marshes or *bils*, formed by the overflowing of the rivers.

In the absence of hills it is hard to trace the natural divisions, but there are many points of difference between the north and the south of the district. There is a small patch of jungle in police station Goālpokhar on the two sides of the national highway, and another in police station Choprā, but in the rest of the district forest or jungle is scarce. Although a number of rivers traverses the district, these do not act as boundaries of any natural divisions. Jute is mainly cultivated in the Islāmpur sub-division while jute and rice occupy about equal importance in Rāiganj. The Sadar or Bālurghāt sub-division may be considered as the granary of the district, rice being its principal crop. Chilli is grown abundantly in Kushmandi and Kāliāganj police stations.

(c) RIVER SYSTEM AND WATER RESOURCES

Main rivers and tributaries.

Mahanandā.

The river Mahānandā forms the northern boundary of the district for a few miles along its course. This Mahānandā river may perhaps be identified with the Nandā or Aparanandā mentioned in the *Tirthayātrā* section of the *Vanaparvan*

of the *Mahābhārata*. The Mahānandā rises within the district of Dārjeeling where it is known by the name of Mahānadi. At the point where it forms the boundary of the district of West Dinājpur it flows in a south-westerly direction. It then leaves the district and after flowing through the district of Purneā is joined by the Nāgar at a place called Mukundapur situated in police station Itāhār. From this point the combined stream of the Nāgar and the Mahānandā forms the boundary of West Dinājpur and Māldā for a considerable distance. A fair-weather bridge is constructed towards the end of autumn every year with timber to act as the connecting link across the river between the two portions of the state highway to Dārjeeling and Assam. This bridge is dismantled before the onset of the monsoon, and during the rains motor vehicles are ferried across the river. During the greater part of the year the water flows only along a very narrow channel leaving most of the bed dry, and it is only during two or three months in the rainy season that the entire channel is full of water. The water of the river, however, nearly overflows the banks at the point the ferry is operated. Occasionally in years of heavy rain parts of the Itāhār police station become inundated by the overflowing of the banks of the Mahānandā. The direction of flow of the river as a whole is generally from the north to the south, but the direction changes at a few points on account of the meandering course of the river.

Nāgar

The Nāgar takes its rise towards the north in Pakistan. It enters the district at the tri-junction point where the police stations of Rāiganj and Karandighi in West Dinājpur meet Pakistan territory. It flows through the district forming the boundary between the police stations of Karandighi and Rāiganj and then acts as the boundary between West Dinājpur and Purneā districts in police station Itāhār until it finally joins the Mahānandā. The principal tributaries of the Nāgar flowing through the district are the Nonā or the Gāndhār and the Kulik, both flowing through the Rāiganj police station. A bridge was built in 1958 over the Gāndhār and the Nāgar on the highway to Dārjeeling and Assam, before which there used to be a ferry for transhipment of motor vehicles and carts. The bed of the Nāgar is wide but during most of the year the water is confined to a narrow channel. Both the tributaries are now almost in a moribund condition. There is also a bridge over the Kulik along the national highway to Dārjeeling. The Kulik rises in Thākurgāon police station of Dinājpur (Pakistan) and enters the district across the boundary of Hemtābād police station. It flows through Hemtābād and Rāiganj police stations and then joins the Nāgar about seven miles (or eleven km) south-west of Rāiganj town.

Sui

The Sui is a branch of the principal river Nāgar which proceeds from west to east. The Nāgar joins the Mahā-

nandā in police station Itāhār. Before it meets the Mahānandā, a side branch channel shoots off and is known as the river Sui. This river, following a meandering course through the district of West Dinājpur, joins the Mahānandā at about eighteen miles (about twenty-nine km) down-stream from its point of origin. The width of the bed of this river is about eighty to one hundred feet (about twenty-four to thirty metres), and variations in the water level between dry and rainy seasons are between 0 to 15 ft. (0 to 5 m).

Gamari. The Gāmāri originates from Rāndhanipārā *bil* areas in police station Kāliāganj and flowing on a meandering course for about sixteen miles (about twenty-six km) more or less in the southern direction, meets the river Sui near Barot in police station Itāhār. The width of the bed of this river is about eighty ft. (about twenty-four m), and the water level varies between four to ten ft. (about one to three m). Small boats ply during the monsoons in both the rivers, Sui and Gāmāri.

Chhiramati. The Chhirāmati, called the Shrimati in the lower reaches, gets its waters from some marshes in the south-western part of police station Kāliāganj. There are two principal branches which join together at the tri-junction point of the police stations of Kushmandi, Itāhār and Kāliāganj, after which the combined stream flows along the boundary of the Itāhār and Kushmandi police stations. For a few kilometres it also serves as the boundary line between the police stations of Bangshihāri and Itāhār and after flowing through two or three miles (that is, about three to five km) in Itāhār police station, enters the district of Māldā. A bridge was recently constructed across the Chhirāmati in police station Kushmandi on the state highway to Dārjeeling after the bridge built by the District Board had been pronounced to be unsafe. Ekdālā, where a fort was located, was the place where Shams-ud-din Ilyās Shāh withstood the army of Firuz Tughluq of Delhi and where Sikandar Shāh, the son of Shams-ud-din Ilyās Shāh, also fought against Firuz Tughluq of Delhi. This Ekdālā has been identified by Stapleton with the land situated near the junction of the Chhirāmati and the Bāliā rivers. The Chhirāmati is a sluggish stream and not of much importance to the district.

Tangan. The Tāngan rises in that part of the Jalpāiguri district which now forms part of Pakistan, and enters the district of West Dinājpur at the tri-junction point of the police stations of Pirganj and Bochāganj in Pakistan and Kāliāganj police station. It passes through the police stations of Kāliāganj, Kushmandi and Bangshihāri, and then enters the district of Māldā. In some parts of its course it acts as the boundary between the police stations of Gangārāmpur and Bangshihāri. The headquarters of Bangshihāri police station is situated on the bank of the Tāngan. The Tāngan is a fairly large river, and usually overflows its banks during the rains thereby

inundating some areas along its banks, although the extent of such inundation is not very considerable. It is navigable by boats throughout the year.

Punarbhava. The Punarbhavā (corrupt form of the original name, Apunarbhavā meaning that a bather in it has not to suffer the ordeal of re-birth) enters the district across the northern boundary of the police station of Gangārāmpur and flows through the police stations of Gangārāmpur and Tapan, and then enters Pakistan. For a part of its course, it forms the boundary between the districts of Māldā and West Dinājpur. In police station Gangārāmpur it flows past Gangārāmpur proper. The ruins of Koṭivarsha or Devkoṭ or Bāngarh are situated on the left or eastern bank of the Punarbhavā river. According to an alternative reading of a verse in the *Rāma-charita* composed by Madanapāla's court-poet, Sandhyākaranandi, the "Apunarbhavā, in the very heart of Varendree" was a "great place of pilgrimage." The road along the sides of Kāldighi and Dhaldighi in police station Gangārāmpur leads to these ruins. The Punarbhavā throws a shallow stream two miles (about three km) north of Gangārāmpur, which is known as Brāhmani. The Brāhmani traverses Gangārāmpur and Tapan police stations and then leaves the district. It is now an insignificant stream. There are *hilsā* fisheries in the Punarbhavā.

Atrai. The Ātrāi enters the district on the north in Kumārganj police station. It flows right across Kumārganj and Bālurghāt police stations. Both Kumārganj and Bālurghāt are situated on the bank of the Ātrāi. The bed of the river Ātrāi is wide, but the entire bed remains full of water only during the rains. It, however, never goes dry.

Prior to 1785, the rivers Ātrāi and Punarbhavā were connected with the river Tistā. Sometime between 1785 and 1787 a bar formed about four miles (about six km) above the place called Kāntāmari or Kātāmari and ten miles (sixteen km) below Jalpāguri town, blocking the junction of the rivers Ātrāi and Punarbhavā with the Tistā. As a result, the Tistā which used to flow to the Ganges along the channels of the Punarbhavā, the Ātrāi and the Karatoyā, changed its course and flowing through the district of Rangpur, joined the Brahmaputra. The district of Rangpur suffered severely from inundation, and in October, 1787, the matter was reported to the Board of Revenue by the Collector of Dinājpur. The condition of the river Tistā at the point the bar was formed was thus described in March, 1788, by William Hunter, who was the Head Assistant of the Collector of Dinājpur, and who had been deputed by him to make a local investigation:

> "In consequence of your order to proceed to Catamarry to inquire into the nature of the obstructions which have contributed to close up the channel at the influx from the River Teesta into the Rivers Atre and

Purnabubba, I have now the pleasure to inform you of my having been to the place where the bar is formed about four miles above Catamarry, and near two miles from Mundelgot. It is formed of large pebbles and quick sand and intermixed with timbers of 20 to 30 feet long, the property of merchants. The bar appeared to be three or five feet above the surface of the water. The depth of the water in the river at the bar from seven to ten feet and about 600 yards wide. The force of the current runs on the Mundelgot or westerly side of the Teesta, and direct upon the bar, without making the least impression, but from the current over to the opposite shore, on the Baccally side and down the Goggot river which the enclosed sketch of the River and Bar, taken on the spot, I hope, will more fully explain to you.

"The inhabitants at Catamarry and Mundelgot inform me that the bar had been forming in a small degree there three or four years past, that an immense quantity of sand and pebbles came down in the unexpected torrent from the hills, which meeting at a resistance at these places from the number of timber that was laying there, ready to be transported upon the rising of the river, was the cause of the sudden forming of the bar, and the stoppage of the river."

The feasibility of removing the bar and, by closing up the mouth of the new channel, to make the Tistā flow along its old course was examined by the Government, and in 1789 the Governor-General, Lord Cornwallis, sanctioned an estimate of more than two lakhs of rupees (*Siccā* rupees) for carrying out the project, but the project was apparently abandoned after some time probably because it was found to be impracticable.

Both the Punarbhavā and the Ātrāi are now dying rivers, which are gradually silting up. It is difficult to realize the important roles which these two rivers used to play in the economy of the district as important means of communication.

Ichhāmati.

The Ichhāmati originates in East Pakistan area and runs almost parallel to the Ātrāi, keeping a safe ridge width of six to eight miles (about ten to thirteen km). At its point of origin, it forms the boundary of police station Kumārganj, and, flowing through Kumārganj police station, joins the Ātrāi at Rādhānagar, about one mile (1.6 km) above the state highway bridge at Patirām. At lower reaches it also forms a boundary between Kumārganj police station and Bālurghāt police station. The width of the bed of this river is about sixty ft. (about eighteen m).

Yamunā.

The river Yamunā enters the district from the north at the eastern extremity of the Hili police station, and, after flowing past the town of Hili, leaves the district and enters Pakistan.

The length of its course in the district is approximately three miles (about five km). It is a small river.

Tanks. The number of tanks in the district is considerable, there being a tank or two in every village. There are also tanks by the road side. These tanks provide water for bathing, for pisciculture and also for irrigation. Water of some tanks may be used for the purpose of drinking, but it is likely, with the installation of numerous tube-wells, that the water of tanks has ceased to be a major source of supply of drinking water. The more important tanks from the point of view of size are the Mahipāldighi, the Kāldighi, the Dhaldighi, the Prānsāgar and the Tapandighi. The last named tank is the biggest and is situated in the police station of Tapan. It is a very old tank but with the lapse of time a large part of it has silted up. In fact, a portion of a District Board road now runs along the side of the bed of the tank itself. The silted up portions are also being brought under cultivation by the local cultivators. The water is full of weeds and reeds. The Kāldighi is situated in Gangārāmpur police station, very near the road to Buniādpur. It covers an area of about sixty acres (about twenty-four hectares). Almost adjacent to the Kāldighi is the Dhaldighi which is a larger tank. A *mela* is held annually in the ground adjacent to the Dhaldighi tank and is known as the Dhaldighi *mela*. The Prānsāgar tank covers an area of thirty-five acres (about fourteen hectares). It is fairly deep. It is situated in police station Gangārāmpur.

(d) GEOLOGY

Geologically the district is a rather featureless plain consisting entirely of alluvium. The area forms part of the great *bārind* or pleistocene (older) alluvium, which is the largest of the alluvial units of the Bengal basin. At the surface, this older alluvium is covered by the floodplains of the Mahānandā, Tāngan, Punarbhavā, Ātrāi and Yamunā rivers which flow in a southerly direction across the district. Some of these rivers with headwaters in the Himalayan foothills, have deposited a broad piedmont alluvial plain which overlap the *bārind* on the north. Where these rivers flow over the *bārind* they have generally developed entrenched meanders.

The Karatoyā river apparently has its course controlled by a north-west south-east fault forty miles (about sixty-four km) long with upthrow on the south-west. This has probably caused a south-westerly tilting of the uplifted block as judged from the fact that all minor streams draining the eastern portion of the *bārind* flow south-west into the Yamunā river.

The *bārind* consists of well-oxidised, massive reddish coloured argillaceous formations weathering yellow at the surface. *Kānkar* and ferruginous concretions are commonly found in these formations.

In the southern half of the district the soil consists of an ash-coloured clayey silt, locally called *khiār*. This, a soft sticky loam in the rainy season, hardens almost to the consistency of cement in the dry weather, when it is unsuitable for growth of vegetation. In the northern half of the district and on the banks of some of the principal rivers in the south, the soil consists of a sandy loam mixed, towards the north, with gravel. This goes by the local name of *pali*.

The thickness of these alluvial formations is not clearly known. It is generally agreed that the area of which this district forms a part, is a gap between the Gāro and Rājmahal hills filled up by alluvium in comparatively late geological times.

Recent drilling for developing irrigation tube-wells, touched the granite basement at a depth of less than a thousand feet at Buniādpur (north of milepost 34/2) on the Malda-Balurghat Road. This indicates a rather shallow basin.

Good discharges were obtained from tube-wells in Patirām and Bāghān areas while Buniādpur and Phulbāri areas were not promising. Boreholes in Phulbāri and Buniādpur showed the alluvium to consist of a succession of strata rich in finer clastic sediments which do not hold promise of success with heavy-duty tube-wells.

Due to the great earthquake of the 12th June, 1897, with its epicentre on the Shillong plateau, cracks up to a mile in length and upto a few feet in width opened all over low-lying lands. Spoutings of sand and water were observed.

During the 1934 Bihar-Nepal earthquake, West Dinājpur district experienced earthquake intensity of about VI (Mercalli Scale), that is, with phenomenon of few cracks in buildings.

(e) FLORA

Nature of vegetation found in the district.

Apart from the trees in the small jungles in the Goālpokhar police station and the Choprā police station and in the afforested area in Bālurghāt police station, the trees usually found in the district are the mango (*Mangifera indica* L.), jack-fruit (*Artocarpus heterophyllus* Lam.), *jām*, guava, banana, *simul* and *palās* trees. The most abundant vegetation is bamboo, clumps of which can be seen all over the district. The banyan (*Ficus indica*), *peepul* (*Ficus religiosa*), *nim* (*Melia indica*), *krishnachuḍā* and *bāblā* trees are also found in the district. A few date-palms are also seen occasionally on the roadside. The palmyra or *tāl* trees are usually found in numbers around the tanks. The cocoanut tree is conspicuous by its absence. Varieties of reeds are found in the marshes.

Almost the whole of the district having been brought under cultivation, it is not possible to specify particular areas as containing some definite type of vegetation.

Forests.

The area under forest in the district measures 4,755 acres (1,926 hectares), scattered in patches throughout the district. Of these 4,755 acres (1,926 ha), 2,084 acres (844 ha) consist of derelict forests and waste lands planted with trees by the Forests Department. 305 acres (123 ha) of natural forests are in the possession of the Forests Department, and 2,366 acres (958 ha) of natural forests are likely to be taken over by that Department at an early date. Details of natural and planted forests, measuring more than 10 acres (4.05 ha) in area, are given below:

Name of forest range	Name of forest	Area covered (in acres) (Hectares mentioned in brackets)
Bālurghāt	Dāngā	207.68 (84.11)
-do-	Rāiganj	312.05 (126.38)
-do-	Gārāil	424.65 (171.98)
-do-	Khādimpur	11.34 (4.59)
-do-	Barasāpniklā	93.89 (38.02)
-do-	Kākoir	10.73 (4.34)
-do-	Māndāhār	21.36 (8.65)
-do-	Chandipur	71.25 (28.85)
-do-	Bāgduār	11.88 (4.81)
-do-	Āherā	15.06 (6.09)
-do-	Chāndail	10.50 (4.25)
-do-	Purbamallapārā	15.98 (6.47)
-do-	Bighuā	17.13 (6.93)
-do-	Sonāpārā	26.46 (10.71)
-do-	Dhāmjā	80.89 (32.76)
-do-	Dakshinbhabānipur	49.80 (20.16)
-do-	Kāthālhāt, Hossimpur	15.83 (6.41)
-do-	Āsair, Barakāsipur. Dogāchi, Kāshiādāngā	324.66 (131.48)
-do-	Baraibāri	12.67 (5.13)
Chоprā	Bilāshi	30.00 (12.15)
Balurghāt	Goffānagar, Madanganj, Pārbatipur	169.75 (68.74)
-do-	Abhirāmpur	105.59 (42.76)
-do-	Mukundapur	24.32 (9.84)
-do-	Kāshimpur	11.00 (4.45)
-do-	Chakgangāprasād	53.72 (21.75)
-do-	Surangapur, Rāmpur and Bājitpur	198.59 (80.42)
-do-	Ghātāl, Purbabāsoil and others	39.45 (15.97)
-do-	Gorāhār	54.00 (21.87)

The trees found in natural forests are usually *sāl* (*Shorea robusta* Gaertn.) of a stunted variety, *hijal* (*Barringtonia acutangula* Gaertn.), *sisu*, *simul*, etc., being also found. Teak has been planted in Khādimpur in Bālurghāt police station. The quality of the timber is said to be better than the teak produced in Madhya Pradesh.

(f) FAUNA

Zoological types found in the district—Mammals.

Among carnivora, the only animal worth mentioning is the leopard, although the number of leopards is not very large. Jackals, foxes, mongooses and hyaenas are also found. The first three are quite numerous while hyaenas are rarely seen.

The birds of the district include vultures of different kinds, kites, among which the *brāhmani* kite (*Haliastur indus*), a handsome bird with maroon back and white head and neck, is conspicuous, eagles, hawks, swallows and martins, *moinās* and king-crows. Owls are of many varieties, amongst which the small screech-owl is the prettiest and most common. The common Indian crow and the large black carrion crow are plentiful. Amongst birds of the cuckoo family the brain-fever bird (*Hierococcyx varius*), the monotonous repetition of whose call note adds to the trials of the hot season, and the coucal or crow pheasant (*Centropus sinensis*) are found. Small birds of handsome plumage or otherwise attractive appearance are the hoopoe, the golden oriole, the blue jay (*Coriacus indica*), the bee-eaters with their long, slender bills and green plumage, king-fishers large and small. The plumage of the latter is generally a blending of metallic and turquoise blue, of indescribable brilliance, but the most common species of all is the Indian pied king-fisher (*Ceryle varia*), a black and white bird who is to be seen industriously plying his trade over every piece of water. The night jar or goat sucker (*Caprimulgus*) is found everywhere, and its peculiar note resembling a stone striking ice, which can be heard at a great distance at night, has earned it the name of the ice bird amongst Europeans. Of the columbae, the common wood pigeon, and various kinds of doves are fairly plentiful. An extremely beautiful and rather uncommon species of dove is worthy of special mention. This is a wood dove with beautiful dark green, crimson and copper plumage, and is one of the prettiest birds in the district. Amongst water birds may be mentioned the common coot (*Fulica atra*), the purple moor-hen (*Porphyrio poliocephalus*), the common moor-hen, the dabchick, several kinds of herons and cranes, and two species of cormorant, one a small black species and the other a larger bird with black body and wings and yellowish head and neck. Sand pipers or snippets of various kinds and the Indian river tern are common to every stream and *bil*. Birds of the plover family found in the district are the grey plover, the little ringed plover, and the red-wattled plover (*Sarcogrammus*), the latter distinguished by its peculiar cry, which sounds something like "did you do it" or "pity to do it". Snipes are not very common, but a few of the ordinary kinds, i.e., fantail, pintail, jack and painted snipe may be met with on the edges of some of the larger *bils*. The land game birds of the district are the black partridge or *titir* (*Francolinus vulgarus*), the *kyah* or swamp partridge (*Ortygiornis gularis*), the grey quail and the button quail. The latter are to be found anywhere in grass jungle, but are never plentiful. Partridges of both kinds are fairly plentiful in the low grass country on the lower reaches of the Punarbhavā, but elsewhere are rare. The commonest wild fowl are the gadwall, the pochard, the common teal, the large and small

whistling teal, and the cotton teal. These frequent some of the *bils* and rivers, and occasionally tanks also. The ruddy sheldrake or *brāhmani* duck is met with sometimes, but the larger and finer species of duck such as the mallard, the pintail, and the spot bill, are rarely, if ever seen.

Reptiles

Snakes are fairly common, and the poisonous varieties are the cause of some loss of life, especially during the rains. The number of species is not large, the principal being the cobra, the *chandraboḍā*, the common *karāit*, various grass snakes, and some water snakes. Among cobras the sand-coloured variety known as *kharis* is fairly common, while the black variety known as *kautia* is not so common. The bahded *karāit* (*Bungarus fasciatus*) and the python or boa constrictor (*Python molurus*) are occasionally found. The *karāit* grows to a length of seven or eight feet (about two metres), and preys upon other snakes. The python rarely exceeds twelve feet (about four metres), though individuals may attain twenty feet (about six metres). Of the lizards the most familiar are the geckos, amongst which we may distinguish especially the small house gecko to be seen on the walls and ceilings of every house, and the large gecko (*Gecko stentor*) whose peculiar cry has given the name of the whole genus. This is most commonly found in the north-western portions of the district. On the edges of many of the *bils* the monitor or *guisāp* is found. This is a large lizard, with some outward resemblance to a crocodile, and is eaten by some low caste Hindus. Two kinds of crocodiles, the *magar* (*Crocodilus palustris*) called locally *kumir* or *boch̤ā*, a blunt-nosed species, and the *ghariyāl* (*gavialis*) or long-snouted, fish-eaṭing crocodile, reportedly exist in some of the rivers, especially the Nāgar, Punarbhavā, and Mahānandā, and in some *bils* and old tanks, but no one has been attacked by crocodiles in recent years. The common river turtle (*Testudo elegans*) is found in most of the rivers, and is eaten by some. The Gangetic dolphin or *susuk* (*Platanista gangetica*) was seen in 1958 in the river Ātrāi at the point where it flows near the bungalow of the District Magistrate.

Fishes.

Almost all the fresh water varieties of fishes are available in the district, the more important among which are (1) CARPS:—*kātlā* (*Catla catla*), *ruhu* (*Labeo rohita*), *kālbaus* (*Labeo calbasu*), *goni* (*Labeo gonius*), *bātā* (*Labeo bata*), *mrigel* (*Cirrhina mrigala*), *rebā* (*Cirrhina reba*); (2) CAT FISHES:—*boāl* (*Wallagonia attu*), *āir* (*Mystus aor*), *tengrā* (*Mystus gulio*), *ritā* (*Rita rita*), *pungāsh* (*Pangasius pungasius*), *silon* (*Silonia silondia*), *pābdā* (*Callichrous pabda*), *bāchā* (*Eutropiichthys vacha*), *gāruā* (*Pseudeutropius garua*); (3) FEATHER BACKS:—*foloi* (*Natopterus notopterus*), *chital* (*Natopterus chitala*): (4) MURRELS:—*tala* (*Ophicephalus punctatus*), *sole* (*Ophicephalus striatus*), *sāl* (*Ophicephalus marulius*), *cheng* (*Ophicephalus gachua*); (5) JEOL FISHES:—*singhi* (*Heteropneustes fossilis*), *māgur* (*Clarius*

batrachus), *koi* (*Anabas testudineus*), *kholishā* (*Colisa lalius*), *Trichogaster* spp ; (6) *PUNTI* :—*punti* (*Barbus puntius*), *saral punti* (*Barbus sarana*), *titpunti* (*Barbus ticto*) ; (7) OTHER MISCELLANEOUS VARIETIES:—*darke* (*Esomus danricus*), *rasborā* (*Rasbora* spp), *techokho* (*Panchax panchax*), *darke* (*Rasbora daniconius*), *bānshpāti* (*Aila colia*), *chāndā* (*Ambassis* spp), *morulā* (*Amblypharyngodon mola*); (8) MULLETS:—*lizā* (*Mugil*), *kharsulā* (*Carsula*) ; and (9) CLUPEIDS:—*ilish* (*Hilsa ilisha*), *chāpilā* (*Gadusia chapra*).

The quantities of fishes reared or caught locally is not sufficient to meet the demand and, therefore, fresh water fishes have to be imported from Pakistan and Bihar. Fishes are available in the three important rivers—Ātrāi, Punarbhavā and Tāngan—as also in the numerous tanks. *Hilsā* is caught in the Punarbhavā.

(g) CLIMATE

There is no meteorological observatory in the district.

Climatic divisions and seasons, and their duration.—Temperature and humidity.—Rainfall.

The length of the district from north to south being considerable, the climate varies somewhat as one travels from Bālurghāt to Islāmpur, the nights being noticeably cooler in the northern parts. The district is situated to the north of the Tropic of Cancer and, therefore, it is not so hot and humid as the districts lying to the south of it. The principal seasons are the summer, rains, autumn, winter and spring. The season known as *sarat* in Bengali cannot be easily distinguished from *hemanta* or autumn proper and, therefore, it would be proper to describe the season intervening between the rains and winter as autumn. The summer begins from the middle of March. The day temperature goes on increasing in the months of April and May till the monsoon breaks in the early part of June when a drop in the temperature is brought about by the monsoon showers. May is the hottest month of the year and is the time when fruits ripen. The atmosphere remains humid in summer but not to the extent noticed in the southern districts. Towards the end of summer there are occasional thunder showers accompanied by high wind, which are known as *kālbaishākhi*. The force of the gale on such occasions sometimes becomes so violent as to demolish huts and similar frail structures.

The monsoon showers which usually begin in the early part of June, are fairly heavy, but the rainfall varies from one part of the district to another. It becomes steadily heavier as one travels north.

The rains taper off from the end of September which may be taken to mark the advent of the *sarat* season, during which clouds are only lightly charged with rain and the rainfall takes place only over scattered areas. From the middle of October to the middle of November rain-bearing clouds are usually

not encountered and the period may be described as the autumn season. The nights begin to become cooler and dew forms at night. The winter is cold and dry but the cold is not severe. The period from November to middle of March is really pleasant. The sky is generally cloudless at this time of the year. Occasional showers are not uncommon in winter.

Atmospheric pressure.

Except in late summer and the monsoon when winds are slightly stronger, they are generally moderate. In the monsoon season winds blow mainly from directions between south and east. In the post monsoon season winds are variable in direction. In the cold season they are from west to north. In the summer season southerlies and south-westerlies are also common.

The tables below give an idea of the extent of rainfall at Gangārāmpur, Itāhār, Rāiganj and Bālurghāt.

The maximum amounts of rainfall recorded during 24 hours were 34.44 cm on the 26th August, 1918, at Gangārāmpur, 34.29 cm on the 21st September, 1942, at Itāhār, 21.72 cm on the 11th September, 1920, at Rāiganj, and 48.18 cm on the 1st October, 1937, at Bālurghāt.

TABLES

AVERAGE RAINFALL
(in cm)

Months	Recording Stations			
	Gangārāmpur	Itāhār	Rāiganj	Bālurghāt
January	0.81	0.86	0.84	0.97
February	1.52	1.50	1.52	1.93
March	1.47	1.60	1.65	1.91
April	4.17	3.35	4.04	4.85
May	13.79	11.07	12.98	17.96
June	30.07	29.03	29.62	33.45
July	33.50	32.97	34.04	36.32
August	33.71	35.51	35.13	36.50
September	27.86	28.25	26.16	30.91
October	11.13	10.03	10.44	15.57
November	0.79	0.97	0.97	1.29
December	0.25	0.20	0.33	0.13
TOTAL	159.07	155.34	157.72	181.79

Source: Office of the Deputy Director General of Observatories (Climatology and Geophysics), Government of India.

AVERAGE NUMBER OF RAINY DAYS
(Days with rain of 2.5 mm or more)

Months	Recording Stations			
	Gangārāmpur	Itāhār	Rāiganj	Bālurghāt
January	0.7	0.7	0.6	0.7
February	1.2	1.4	1.2	1.5
March	1.2	1.4	1.1	1.4
April	3.0	2.1	2.5	3.0
May	6.4	6.2	5.8	7.5
June	11.9	11.9	10.3	13.2
July	14.5	15.1	13.2	16.1
August	14.4	14.8	12.9	15.4
September	10.5	11.2	9.5	11.5
October	3.7	3.8	3.3	4.6
November	0.4	0.7	0.5	0.8
December	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.1

Source: Office of the Deputy Director General of Observatories (Climatology and Geophysics), Government of India

CHAPTER II

HISTORY

(a) ANCIENT PERIOD

Legendary history.

The district of West Dinājpur comprises an area which in ancient times formed a part of the kingdom of Pundravardhana. Pundravardhana was the country of the Pundras. Some curious legends are mentioned about the origin of the Pundras in the *Mahābhārata*, the *Matsya* and *Vāyu Purānas* and the *Aitareya Brāhmana*. According to the *Mahābhārata* and the *Matsya* and *Vāyu Purānas*, the sage Dirghatamas had five sons by queen Sudeshnā, the wife of king Bali, and these five sons were named Anga, Vanga, Kalinga, Pundra and Suhma. The Pundras are the descendants of this Pundra. According to the *Aitareya Brāhmana*, Pundras are the descendants of the sons of Visvāmitra, who had been cursed by him. They were styled as *dasyus* or barbarians. The *Sabhāparvan* of the *Mahābhārata* on the other hand refers to the Vangas and Pundras as well-born Kshatriyas. The Karatoyā has been mentioned as a sacred river in the *Tirtha-yātrā* section of the *Mahābhārata*. Karna is said to have vanquished the Pundras. Krishna also is said to have defeated the Pundras. Paundraka-Vāsudeva is said to have united Vanga, Pundra and Kirāta into a powerful kingdom and entered into an alliance with Jarāsandha of Magadha. Patanjali in his *Mahābhāshya* makes a reference to Pundras. It is mentioned in the *Rāmāyana* that search parties that were sent to the east in quest of Sitā, were asked to visit the land of the Pundras.

4th Century B.C.

According to *Brihatkathākosha* of Harishena, Bhadrabāhu, the Jaina *guru* of Chandragupta Maurya, was a son of a Brahmin of Kotivarsha in Pundravardhana. The Jaina *Kalpasutra* is said to have been compiled by Bhadrabāhu. There was a split in the Jaina church after Bhadrabāhu, and this led to the foundation of a number of schools having a general affiliation to the main church. According to this tradition, Godāsa, a disciple of Bhadrabāhu, was responsible for the foundation of a school called Godāsa-gana which in course of time had four *shākhās*, three of which were called Tāmraliptika, Kotivarshiya and Pundravardhaniya. This Kotivarsha has been identified with Devkot which again has been identified with Bāngarh in police station Gangārāmpur. A curious legend is associated with Bāngarh. It appears that Bali Rājā reigned over this part of the country. He was a devotee of Shiva. His son was Bān Rājā, a mighty hero with thousand arms, who fought with Krishna. Krishna is said

to have invaded the country and defeated Bān Rājā who was saved by Shiva. This legend may be taken as a distorted echo of the *Mahābhārata* traditions relating to the sage Dirghatamas, and the defeat of Paundraka-Vāsudeva by Krishna.

Buddhism spread in Pundravardhana at about the same time as Jainism. It is narrated in the *Bodhisattvāvadāna Kalpalatā* that Buddha himself once visited Pundravardhana. It also appears from two inscriptions on the Sānchi *Stupa* that two believers in the teachings of Buddha, a lady named Dharmadattā and a gentleman named Rishinandan, both of Pundravardhana, gave contributions towards the construction of the railing and gate of the Sānchi *Stupa*.

3rd century B.C.

The discovery of a seal in 1931 amidst the ruins of Mahāsthāngarh established the fact that Pundranagara or Mahāsthāngarh was a centre of Buddhism in the Maurya period. The message on the Mahāsthāngarh seal concerns the *shramanas* of the Chhavaggiya sect residing at Pundranagara and contains directions regarding the steps to be taken to help them tide over a famine. A few clay seals found during excavations at Bāngarh in 1937-41 have writings in Brāhmi character on them, which may be assigned to the Maurya period. The district therefore appears to have been included in the Maurya empire.

The discovery of terra-cotta figurines of the Shunga period and Kushāna gold coins at Mahāsthāngarh and at Bāngarh indicates that Pundravardhana maintained its relations with the rest of India during the reigns of the Sungas and Kushānas. The terra-cotta figurines show that fine arts flourished at that period. None of the figurines is in any way inferior to the manner in which similar figurines discovered in Mathurā have been fashioned.

3rd century A.D.--544 A.D.

The Allāhābād Pillar Inscription of Samudra-gupta mentions Samatata, Davāka and Kāmarupa as the kingdoms situated on the eastern frontier of Samudra-gupta's empire. Harishena's *prashasti* nowhere mentions that Samudra-gupta had conquered any king of Vanga or Pundravardhana or Gauda, unless, of course, the king Chandravarman mentioned in the Allāhābād Pillar Inscription is identified with king Chandravarman whose inscription is found on the Shushuniā hill in the Bānkurā district. The Chinese traveller, I-tsing, who travelled in India between 671-695 A.D., recorded a tradition that Mahārājā Srigupta built a temple for the Chinese pilgrims and granted an endowment of twenty-four villages for its maintenance. 'The Temple of China' appears to have been situated near the Mrigasthāpana *stupa* in Varendra. The Allāhābād Pillar Inscription and this Chinese tradition may be taken together to mean that Pundravardhana was a part of the Gupta empire since its inception. There is, however, one king Chandra whose exploits have been recorded on the Iron Pillar Inscription at Mehrauli in New Delhi. This king, whose identity has not been disclosed in

the inscription, seems to have defeated a confederacy of hostile chiefs in Vanga. If this king Chandra is identified with Chandra-gupta I, then it is to be assumed that Bengal became a part of the Gupta empire during the reign of Chandra-gupta I, the father of Samudra-gupta. The identification of this king Chandra of the Iron Pillar Inscription with Chandra-gupta II does not appear to be reasonable as there is no other evidence in support of the hypothesis that he had effected any conquest in the east. Moreover, by the time Chandra-gupta II came to the throne the Gupta dynasty was firmly in power, and it would have been only natural for an inscription relating to Chandra-gupta II to contain a reference to his illustrious forefathers, Samudra-gupta and Chandra-gupta I, which this iron pillar inscription does not contain. It seems, therefore, more reasonable to accept the hypothesis that Bengal was either a part of the Gupta empire since its inception or was included in it during the reign of Chandra-gupta I.

The discovery of a number of inscriptions of the Gupta and later Gupta periods within or near the district of West Dinājpur bears ample testimony to the sway of the Guptas over Puṇḍravardhana. Five copper-plate inscriptions were discovered in the village of Dāmodarpur in police station Phulbāri now in East Pakistan, and one copper-plate inscription was discovered in the village of Baigrām in police station Hili. Of the five copper-plate inscriptions found at Dāmodarpur, two relate to the reign of Kumāra-gupta I, two to the reign of Budha-gupta, and the fifth to the reign of a later Gupta emperor whose name could not be deciphered, but who reigned in the year 224 of the Gupta era corresponding to 544 A.D. The Baigrām copper-plate is one of two which were discovered while excavating a tank at Baigrām in police station Hili. The other copper-plate inscription was taken away by the labourer who found it. The Baigrām copper-plate inscription is dated in the year 128 of the Gupta era corresponding to 448 A.D., and thus refers to the reign of Kumāra-gupta I, although the name of the king does not appear in this copper-plate. Of the two inscriptions of the reign of Kumāra-gupta I found at Dāmodarpur, one was issued in the year 124 of the Gupta era and the other in the year 129 of the Gupta era, corresponding to 444 and 449 A.D. respectively. Both the inscriptions refer to sale of land in Koṭivarsha-*vishaya* in Puṇḍravardhana-*bhukti*. The *uparika* of Puṇḍravardhana-*bhukti* at that time was Chirātadatta and the officer-in-charge of Koṭivarsha-*vishaya* was Vetravarman. In one of the copper-plate inscriptions of Budha-gupta, mention has only been made of Puṇḍravardhana-*bhukti* while in the other plate both Puṇḍravardhana-*bhukti* and Koṭivarsha-*vishaya* have been mentioned. These two inscriptions also relate to sale of land. In one of the inscriptions the name of the

uparika is given as Brahmadatta while in the other it is mentioned as Jayadatta. In the inscription in which Brahmadatta was mentioned as the *uparika* of Puṇḍravardhana-*bhukti*, the transaction related to a piece of land situated on the boundary of Vāyigrāma. If this Vāyigrāma is the same as the Baigrām from where an inscription of Kumāra-gupta I was found, then it would be reasonable to conclude that the plot of land was situated near the border of Panchanagari-*vishaya* mentioned in the Baigrām copper-plate inscription.

These copper-plate inscriptions afford valuable information about some aspects of the administration of the country during the reign of the Gupta kings. It appears that land used to be sold outright, free from taxes, where the purchaser required it for some religious purpose. The sale or transfer in each case was made in respect of land owned by the king, as there is no mention of any one being indemnified before the land was made over to the purchaser. The procedure of sale was that, on receipt of application from the intending purchaser, the record-keepers consulted their records to ascertain whether the land had already been given to others or not. On receipt of the report of the record-keepers, the land was sold to the applicant by the local administration, at the head of which was the *kumārāmātya*. The land sold used to be given in perpetuity, free from all taxes. As the king's share was one-sixth of the produce of the land, making the land tax-free enabled the king to share in the merit acquired by the purchaser who donated the land to some temple or god, to the extent of one-sixth of such merit. The *kumārāmātya* was assisted in the administration by the banker, the president of the guild of merchants, the chief artisan and the chief scribe. It is likely that out of these five persons only two, viz., the *kumārāmātya* and the chief scribe, were employees of the king, while the others were private citizens.

It appears from the two copper-plate inscriptions of Kumāra-gupta I found at Dāmodarpur that a part of the kingdom corresponding in size to the modern division used to be styled a *bhukti*. The officer-in-charge of the *bhukti* used to be appointed by the emperor himself and was known as the *uparika*. The *vishaya* was a part of the *bhukti*. The officer-in-charge of the *vishaya* was known as *kumārāmātya* and used to be appointed by the *uparika*. A departure from this practice is noticed in the Baigrām copper-plate inscription, from which it appears that the *kumārāmātya* of Panchanagari was appointed by the emperor himself. There is also no mention that Panchanagari-*vishaya* was situated in any particular *bhukti*. While the *kumārāmātya* of the two Dāmodarpur copper-plate inscriptions of Kumāra-gupta I had to work in collaboration with the members of a council, the *kumārāmātya* of Panchanagari could act independently of the council. The difference in the method of administration

may perhaps be explained by assuming that while Koṭivarsha-*vishaya* had been a unit of administration for a long time, Panchanagari-*vishaya* was not. It accordingly required the emperor's personal supervision. It also seems that demand for land in Koṭivarsha-*vishaya* was greater than in Panchanagari, as the price of one *kulya* of land was three *dinārs* in Koṭivarsha while it was two *dinārs* in Panchanagari. Panchanagari was probably less populous than Koṭivarsha. Another important point to be noticed about this transaction relating to land in the reign of Kumāra-gupta I is that the land was measured in *kulyas* and *dronas* which were measures of seed. One *kulya* or one *drona* of land signified that area of land which could be sown with seed contained in one *kulya* or one *drona*. In the two Dāmodarpur copper-plate inscriptions of Kumāra-gupta I the land being sold has been designated only as lying to the west of a particular place. In the Baigrām copper-plate inscription, however, the land being sold has been accurately measured by *nalas* (reeds), and the boundaries were demarcated on the ground with chaff and charcoal.

The other three copper-plate inscriptions refer to the reigns of Budha-gupta and a later Gupta emperor who has not yet been identified. During this period Puṇḍravardhana-*bhukti* gained in importance within the kingdom as is evident from the title of the *uparika*. The two *uparikas*, Brahmadatta and Jayadatta, mentioned in the two copper-plate inscriptions of Budha-gupta, bore the title of Mahārājā, while in the time of the later Gupta emperor the post of *uparika* was occupied by one of his sons. The designation of the officer next to the *uparika* was *āyuktaka* in one of the copper-plate inscriptions of Budha-gupta, while in the inscription of the later Gupta emperor who reigned in 544 A.D. the designation has been changed to *vishayapati*. In the other copper-plate inscription of the reign of Budha-gupta, there is no mention of the officer-in-charge of the *vishaya*; in fact, there is no mention of the *vishaya*. It is only in this copper-plate inscription that some kind of village council is found to exercise some authority in regard to sale of land. It is also curious that the *āyuktaka* or *vishayapati* has been mentioned as administering the affairs of the town (*adhishṭhāna*). It thus appears that during this period the *adhishṭhāna* or head-quarters of a *vishaya* was administered by the *vishayapati* or *āyuktaka* with the assistance of the council. The jurisdiction of the *vishayapati* or *āyuktaka* and his council probably did not extend throughout the *vishaya*,—an inference which is perhaps supported by the disappearance of the title *kumārāmātya*. On the other hand, it may be said that the village mentioned in copper-plate inscription No. 3 of Dāmodarpur, being situated at the boundary of the new district of Panchanagari, had not at that time been included either in the district of Koṭivarsha or in the district of

Panchanagari and was being directly administered by the *uparika-mahārāja* through local rural councils.

The type of administration revealed by the inscriptions of the Guptas appears to have been an efficient and methodical one. Both gold and silver coins were used during this period,—a fact which testifies to the prosperity of the country. The land, whether fallow or homestead or covered by pathways, used to be sold at the same rate within the same *vishaya*.

The sway of later Guptas continued over North Bengal till the end of the reign of Mahāsena-gupta who defeated Susthita-varman of Kāmarupa. Gupta power disappeared from North Bengal towards the end of the 6th century A.D. It is in the 6th century A.D. that Gauḍa was subjected to attacks by Yashodharman of Mālwā and Isāna-varman, the Maukhari king.

7th century A.D.

The next king of Bengal, Shashānka, apparently began his career as a *mahāsāmanta,* presumably under a Gupta king. He ruled over Gauḍa from his capital at Karnasuvarna. Shashānka was a contemporary of Harshavardhana of Kanauj and he died sometime between 619 and 637 A.D. He withstood the attack of Harshavardhana, and it was only after his death that Bhāskara-varman, the ally of Harsha, succeeded in conquering Gauḍa. Hiuen Tsang, when he visited Bengal, noticed four kingdoms, viz., the kingdoms of Punḍravardhana, Samataṭa, Karnasuvarna and Tāmralipta. Bengal was conquered after the death of Shashānka, also by Yashovarman of Kanauj. Prior to that, it was attacked by a Shaila king. This Shaila king appears to have been the brother of the great grandfather of Jayavardhana, a Shaila king. Dr. R. C. Majumdar assigns the date of about 725 A.D. to his conquest of Punḍravardhana. If Kalhana's *Rājatarangini* is to be believed, then Gauḍa was also conquered by Lalitāditya of Kashmir. These successive attacks from outside completely shattered the existing system of administration and paved the way for the so called '*Mātsyanyāya*', during which the strong oppressed the weak and there was no one who could enforce law and order in the land. It was at this critical time that the local chieftains elected Gopāla to rule over Bengal. There is no record from which the reasons which prompted the chiefs to nominate Gopāla to be the king can be ascertained, but it is remarkable that the dynasty founded by Gopāla, which came to be known as the Pāla dynasty, could reign over Bengal till almost the middle of the 12th century A.D. Gopāla was elected by the people sometime towards the middle of the 8th century A.D. Therefore, the rule of the Pālas over at least North Bengal can be said to have lasted nearly four hundred years.

Middle of 8th century A.D.—Middle of 12th century A.D.

The progenitor of the Pāla dynasty was one Dayitavishnu. His son was Vapyaṭa. Vapyaṭa's son was Gopāla. Although it is not possible to ascertain the country of origin of Dayitavishnu, it is certain that Vapyaṭa and his son Gopāla

were residents of Varendri which is identified as parts of North Bengal. In fact, Varendri has been mentioned as the fatherland in one of the inscriptions of Mahipāla I and in the *Rāma-charita* of Sandhyākaranandi. The Pāla kings may, therefore, be said to be truly indigenous.

Gopāla's principal achievement was the consolidation of his hold over the whole of Bengal. In that process he put down the prevailing lawlessness and brought peace to the land. He does not appear to have entered upon any war of aggression outside the borders of Bengal. This was only natural as under him Bengal just emerged from chaos and probably did not attain sufficient strength for engaging in wars of aggression outside its borders. Gopāla probably reigned from 750 to 770 A.D.

Gopāla was succeeded by his son Dharmapāla who engaged in warfare with the Pratihāras for the hegemony of North India. He is said to have defeated the kings of Bhoja, Matsya, Madra, Kuru, Yadu, Yavana, Abanti, Gandhāra, Kira and Pānchāla and compelled them to admit his suzerainty, and to have set up his own nominee on the throne of Kānyakubja. The Pratihāra king, Vatsarāja, is said to have defeated Dharmapāla, but his success must have been shortlived, because we find Nāgabhaṭa II, the successor of Vatsarāja, claiming a resounding victory over Dharmapāla. Pratihāra power was, however, checked by the Rāshṭrakuṭas, with whom Dharmapāla appears to have entered into some kind of alliance as is apparent from his marriage to a daughter of a Rāshṭrakuṭa chieftain, Parabala. Dharmapāla was probably defeated by the Rāshṭrakuṭa king and ultimately entered into an alliance with him. He was such a good king that his praises used to be sung even by the cowherds, by forest-dwellers, by children, and in the market-places. He was succeeded by his son Devapāla whose mother was the Rāshṭrakuṭa princess. Devapāla was equally powerful as a king as Dharmapāla. He was succeeded by Vigrahapāla I. Vigrahapāla I was succeeded by Nārāyanapāla. He was succeeded by Rājyapāla. Rājyapāla was succeeded by Gopāla II. Gopāla II was succeeded by Vigrahapāla II. Vigrahapāla II was succeeded by Mahipāla I.

Mahipāla I was another great king among the Pālas. He restored the fallen fortunes of his house and re-established the Pāla power. The tank Mahipāldighi in Bangshihāri police station and the *parganā* of Mahinagar or Mohinagar were probably named after him. Mahipāla I was succeeded by Nayapāla. He was succeeded by Vigrahapāla III. Vigrahapāla III had three sons—Mahipāla II, Surapāla and Rāmapāla. There was a popular uprising led by one Divya, a fisherman by caste. Divya deposed Mahipāla II. The Pāla power was thus temporarily eclipsed in North Bengal. It does not appear that Surapāla reigned for any length of time. He was succeeded by Rāmapāla who recovered

Varendri after defeating and killing Bhima, the successor of Divya, with the aid of his uncle Mathanadeva of Anga and other feudatory chiefs. Rāmapāla is said to have established the city of Rāmāvati. The last king of the dynasty, who ruled over North Bengal, was probably Madanapāla.

The reign of the Pāla kings occupies a glorious chapter in the history of Bengal. Dharmapāla established an empire. His son Devapāla consolidated the conquest of his father and perhaps extended the boundaries of the empire. His suzerainty was acknowledged over the whole of Northern India, from Assam to the borders of Kashmir, and his victorious forces marched from the Indus to the upper reaches of the Brahmaputra, and from the Himalayas to the Vindhyas, perhaps even to the southernmost extremity of India. The Pāla kings were Buddhists and the Nālandā *vihāra* attained fame as a seat of learning during their time. According to Tāranātha, a Tibetan historian, Dharmapāla established fifty religious institutions throughout his kingdom.

During the reign of the Pālas, Bengal enjoyed peace and good government which were, however, disturbed for short periods during the reign of Vigrahapāla I who was defeated by the Rāshṭrakuṭa king, Amoghavarsha, and during the reign of Nārāyanapāla who was defeated by the Pratihāra king, Mahendrapāla. The Pālas suffered another reverse during the reign of Vigrahapāla II at the hands of the Kāmbojas.

Puṇḍravardhana-*bhukti* has been mentioned in the Khālimpur (Māldā) copper-plate inscription of Dharmapāla, in the Bāngarh copper-plate inscription of Mahipāla I, in the copper-plate inscription of Vigrahapāla III, found in Āmgāchhi, Dinājpur district, in the Manahali copper-plate inscription of Madanapāla and in the inscriptions of Mahipāla I and Vigrahapāla III found in 1946 in village Belāwa in police station Ghorāghāt, now in East Pakistan. A stone inscription was found at Bāngarh relating to the reign of Gopāla III. Three of the copper-plate grants relate to gifts of land made to Brāhmanas by the reigning kings. Dharmapāla's copper-plate inscription, however, relates to the gift of four villages made in favour of the deity Nanna-Nārāyana, on the prayer of *Mahāsāmantādhipati* Shri Nārāyanavarman, so that regular worship of the deity could be performed by Brāhmanas hailing from the Lāṭa country. The deeds of gift were executed for the information of the emperor's officers and also local residents. It appears from the inscription of Dharmapāla that during his reign it was the custom for the emperor to seek the formal approval of all these persons to the gift of land. This practice probably originated from the circumstances under which Gopāla was raised to the throne. This custom was changed in the reigns of the succeeding emperors, as neither

Mahipāla I nor Vigrahapāla III nor Madanapāla thought it necessary to keep up this formality. In fact, it appears from the Monghyr copper-plate inscription of Devapāla, that the practice was changed during his reign. In place of the phrase "*Matamastubhabatām*" (may this receive your consent), the phrase "*Biditamastubhabatām*" (may it be known to you) has been used by Mahipāla I, Vigrahapāla III and Madanapāla. This change in the mode of address perhaps reflects the attitude of the later Pāla emperors who probably considered themselves kings in their own right.

It is unfortunate that the copper-plate inscriptions of the Pāla emperors, which have come to light, relate only to gifts of land made by the reigning emperor. The absence of any inscription in which a record of sale of land was made, has made it impossible to have any knowledge about the type of administration that prevailed during this period. A large number of officials have, however, been mentioned in all these copper-plate inscriptions. The existence of numerous officials would go to show that the emperors' authority extended in many directions, although it is not possible to state definitely what were the duties of each official. The officials mentioned in the inscription of Dharmapāla are *rājarājanyaka, rājaputra, rājāmātya, senāpati, vishayapati, bhogapati, shashṭhādhikrita, dandashakti, dandapāshika, chauroddharanika, dauhsādhasādhanika, duta, khola, gamāgamika, abhitvaramāna, hastyādhyaksha, aswādhyaksha, gabādhyaksha, mahishādhyaksha, ajābikādhyaksha, nāvādhyaksha, balādhyaksha, tarika, shaulkika, gaulmika, tadāyuktaka* and *viniyuktaka*. In the time of Mahipāla I some changes are noticed in this hierarchy of officials. The officials designated as *bhogapati, shashṭhādhikrita, dandashakti, khola, balādhyaksha* are conspicuous by their absence while officials like *mahāsāndhi vigrahika, mahākshapaṭalika, mahāpratihāra, mahādandanāyaka, kumārāmātya, rājasthāniya-uparika, dāshāparādhika, dandika, kshetrapa, prāntapāla, koṭṭapāla, ushṭrādhyaksha, antaranga, praishanika* and *grāmapati* are mentioned for the first time. In the inscription of Vigrahapāla III found at Āmgāchhi, the only new official named is the *angaraksha*. In the Manahali inscription of Madanapāla two new officials have been named, viz., *mahāsāmanta* and *shaunika*.

The inscription of Dharmapāla mentions a *mahāsāmanta*, Shri Nārāyanavarma, and, therefore, it may be presumed that in the administrative system of the Pālas there was place for feudatory chiefs called *mahāsāmantas* or *rājas* or *rājanyakas*. It is likely that the system of administration, which prevailed in the area directly administered was somewhat different from that under the control of a *mahāsāmanta*. But it is evident that the kingdom was divided into *bhuktis, mandalas* and *vishayas*. It is difficult to state whether a *mandala* was situated within a *vishaya* or a *vishaya* within

a *maṇḍala*, as both instances have been mentioned in the inscriptions. At any rate it can be safely stated that *maṇḍalas* and *vishayas* were parts of *bhuktis*. A *vishayapati* obviously was in charge of a *vishaya*, and officials like *jeshṭhakāyastha*, *mahāmahattara*, *mahattara* and *dāshagrāmika* possibly assisted him in the administration of the *vishaya*. A *dāshagrāmika* probably was in charge of ten villages while a *grāmapati* was probably in charge of one village only.

The Pāla emperors had a well-organized navy. Their armed forces included soldiers mounted on elephants, cavalrymen, and soldiers mounted on camels. The *Mahāsenāpati* was obviously in charge of the armed forces while the *mahāsāndhivigrahika* was the minister in charge of peace and war. The *mahādaṇḍanāyaka* was the chief justice while the *mahāpratihāra* might be called the chief of police. The *shaulkika* obviously used to realize *shulka* or customs dues while the *gaulmika* probably superintended the earning from forests. The *tarika* probably used to realize tolls from ferries. It would be unprofitable to speculate further on the duties of the other officials, but before leaving this subject one point should perhaps be mentioned. In every case while granting land after making it free from tax, the emperor has forbidden the entry into it of persons designated as *chāṭas* and *bhaṭas*. Who these persons were is a mystery which has not been satisfactorily solved. But it is obvious that these classes of persons were fairly numerous.

From the fact that the boundaries of villages given to the Brāhmanas were meticulously described, it is reasonable to infer that accurate records were kept regarding land. The emperor could donate entire villages. It naturally follows that between the State and the actual possessor of the soil there was no intermediary. It is, however, not possible to ascertain from these inscriptions how much revenue could be expected from a particular village, although the types of taxes realized from the people can be guessed from the designations of some of the officials. Dharmapāla gave the villages with the market places, pathways and drains (*Talapātakasameta*). Mahipāla I gave the village with *trinayutigocharaparyantasatala soddesha sāmra madhuka sajalasthala sagartoshara bhāgabhogakarahiranyādipratyaya*. The terms of grant mentioned in the inscriptions of Vigrahapāla III and Madanapāla are the same as in the inscriptions of Mahipāla I. It follows from the conditions that mango and *mahuā* trees provided a separate source of income. Same remarks may be applied to pastures. The emperor's dues from land were divided into four categories —*bhāga*, *bhoga*, *kara*, *hiranya*. *Bhāga* was one-sixth of the share of the produce to which the emperor was entitled while *kara* was the tax payable in money. It is, however, not possible to state with definiteness what *bhoga* and *hiranya*

stood for. The inscriptions of Mahipāla I and Vigrahapāla III found at Belāwa prove that the *kulya* and *drona* continued to be measures of land. *Pramāna* and *udmāna* were measures of land in use during the reign of the Pālas which are not found in the Gupta inscriptions discussed earlier.

The inscription of Mahipāla I found at Bāngarh, the inscription of Vigrahapāla III found at Āmgāchhi and the inscription of Madanapāla found at Manahali are of special interest to the district as the lands given away were situated in Koṭivarsha-*vishaya* of Puṇḍravardhana-*bhukti*. Koṭivarsha (Bāngarh) was situated in Varendri. The Ganges and the Karatoyā formed the boundary of Varendri in two directions. During the reign of Rāmapāla, a large number of Brāhmanas resided in Koṭivarsha. Sonitanagara or Koṭivarsha or Bāngarh was situated on the bank of the Punarbhavā. The excavations carried out by Shri K. G. Goswami of the University of Calcutta in 1937-41 at Bāngarh have proved the existence of a prosperous city at the place during the Pāla period. This city appears to have been in existence even from before the Pāla period.

The Pāla emperors were ardent Buddhists, but persons professing other religions were not deprived of their support and bounty. In the inscriptions discussed above, the Pāla emperors have recorded gifts of villages to Brāhmanas or to a deity. The Khālimpur inscription of Dharmapāla mentions the temple of Kādambari or Sarasvati, the goddess of learning. This is of interest as the present custom is to worship the goddess only once a year. The emperors did not hesitate to appoint devout Brāhmanas as their Prime Ministers. They also did not think it inconsistent with their belief in Buddhism to attend *Yajnas* performed by Brāhmanas. They were great patrons of learning and it was during their reign that the Vikramashila *vihāra* and Jagaddala *vihāra* attained fame as centres of Buddhistic learning. A high degree of skill in art and sculpture was attained in this region during the reign of the Pāla emperors. Especially sculpture flourished under their patronage. But by this time the artists had found a different mode of expression. As can be seen from the images which have been and are still being found, they worked in stone instead of clay, and the not inconsiderable number of statues and images that have been unearthed in the district show very high excellence of artistic skill. The statues were usually chiselled out of black basalt.

Medicine and poetry received great impetus during their reign. Chakrapānidatta who flourished either during the reign of Nayapāla or his successor, wrote the *Āyurvedadipikā* or *Charakatātparya-dipikā*, *Bhānumati*, *Shabdachandrikā* and *Dravyagunasamgraha*. Sandhyākaranandi, the great poet of Rāmapāla's time, wrote the *Rāma-charita*. Dhimān and

Bitpālo evolved a distinct style of sculpture. The Pāla emperors were benevolent and excavated many tanks for the supply of drinking water to the people.

Middle of 12th century A.D.—1201 A.D.

The Pāla dynasty came to an end in Bengal during the reign of Madanapāla. Madanapāla was defeated by Vijayasena of the Sena dynasty. The Senas claimed descent from the Moon. The progenitor of the dynasty was one Virasena, but detailed genealogy is forthcoming only from Sāmantasena. The Senas have described themselves variously as Brahma-Kshatriyas, Karnāṭa-Kshatriyas and princes of Rāḍhā. The Senas probably came to Bengal from Karnāṭa in South India after the Pāla emperors started entering into matrimonial alliances with Rāshṭrakuṭas and other non-Bengali dynasties. They settled in Rāḍhā and became local chieftains under the Pālas and gradually ousted them, taking advantage of the decline of the Pāla power. Sāmantasena's son was Hemantasena. It was Hemantasena's son Vijayasena who defeated the last Pāla king. The rule of the Senas over North Bengal, however, was rather short-lived as the Sena kingdom was replaced by the Muslim kingdom established by Muhammad Bakhtyār Khalji in approximately 1201 A.D. Vijayasena, Vallālasena and Lakshmanasena are the Sena kings who ruled over North Bengal between the first half of the 12th century A.D. and the beginning of the 13th century A.D. Puṇḍravardhana-*bhukti* formed a part of the Sena kingdom in Bengal, but the Puṇḍravardhana-*bhukti* of the Senas was bigger than the Puṇḍravardhana-*bhukti* of the Pālas, because at the time of Lakshmanasena, Puṇḍravardhana-*bhukti* included almost the whole of North Bengal and East Bengal up to Chittāgong and the districts of the Presidency Division situated to the south of the Padmā. It would, therefore, not be profitable to discuss the contents of all the copper-plate inscriptions in which the Puṇḍravardhana-*bhukti* has been mentioned. It would be enough to describe in detail the contents of only one copper-plate which was found within the present district of West Dinājpur, viz., at Tapandighi. This inscription was issued in the second year of the reign of Lakshmanasena. It records the gift of a village named Belahisṭi situated in Varendri within Puṇḍravardhana-*bhukti* to one Ishvaradeva Sharmana as fee (*dakshinā*) on account of his service as *āchārya* in the *hemāshvarathamahādāna* ceremony. The grant was issued from the camp of victory at Vikramapura in East Bengal. The inscription contains the names of numerous officials some of whom bore designations which were the same as those borne by officers under the Pālas. Among the officials and high personages mentioned in the inscription of Lakshmanasena, who were not mentioned in the Pāla records, mention may be made of *rājni*, *rānaka*, *purohita*, *mahādharmādhyaksha*, *mahāmudrādhikrita*, *brihad-uparika*, *mahābhogika*, *mahāpilupati* and *mahāganastha*. The existence of the *purohita* and the *mahādharmādhyaksha*

among the high officers naturally leads to the inference that the clergy was a power to reckon with in the Sena system of administration. A reference to *adhyaksha-prachāra*, alluding to officials not specifically named in the inscription, shows that the administrative system was based on the *Arthashāstra* of Kauṭilya. The village of Belahisṭi was given in honour of the god Nārāyana by Lakshmanasena who described himself as a Vaishnava. It is evident that the Vedic Hindu religion received a new lease of life during the reign of the Senas. Buddhism, however, had not entirely disappeared from Bengal at that time as the inscription itself records the existence of a Buddhist monastery on the boundary of the land being donated. The village was granted along with bushes and trees, land and water, pits and barren lands, cocoanut and arecanut trees, along with meadow and pastures. As the Senas hailed from Karnāṭa, the cocoanut tree and the arecanut tree probably seemed to them more important than the mango and *mahuā* trees. The village donated measured 120 *āḍhavāpas* and yielded an income of 150 *kapardaka-purānas*. The use of *kapardaka-purānas* which was a copper coin, in calculating the income from a village in place of *dinār* or *rupaka* of the Guptas, probably denotes the scarcity of the precious metals during the reign of the Senas.

Aniruddha Bhaṭṭa, one of the *dharmādhyakshas* of Lakshmanasena, was born in *Champāhaṭṭi* in Varendri. He is said to have been the teacher of Vallālasena. Vallālasena wrote the *Dānasāgara* at the request of Aniruddha. Aniruddha Bhaṭṭa's own works, *Hāralutā* and *Pitridayita*, relate to the ritualistic side of Hindu religion. This preoccupation with the ritualistic side of religion testifies to the decadence of Hinduism as practised at that time.

The greatest extension of the Sena kingdom took place in the reign of Lakshmanasena, and unfortunately it was during his reign that the downfall of the Senas began. At the height of his power Lakshmanasena ruled over a part of India, which was bounded on the west by Bānāras, and which included Assam in the east and Orissa in the south. Lakshmanasena's defeat at the hand of Muhammad Bakhtyār Khalji in 1201 A.D., therefore, appears to be rather surprising. The reason for the sudden collapse of the Sena power in North and West Bengal probably lay in the absence of any strong Hindu kingdom at the western border of the Sena kingdom at the time and also possibly in the lack of popular support to an alien dynasty which had not had sufficient time to evoke the loyalty of the people. It is certain that towards the end of the 12th century A.D. the armed forces of the Senas had become somewhat disorganised as is evident from the ease with which Muhammad Bakhtyār Khalji carried out the plundering raid of Odantapuri within Lakshmanasena's kingdom two years prior to the actual invasion of Bengal.

A feeling of helplessness seemed to have got hold of the people and their king for which the astrologers and priests should probably be blamed. It is they who by their repeated prophecies of the defeat of the Hindus at the hands of the Yavanas, sapped the morale of the people and the army thus making the field ripe for the invasion of Muhammad Bakhtyār Khalji.

(b) MEDIEVAL PERIOD

1201 A.D.—1342 A.D. Muhammad Bakhtyār Khalji defeated Lakshmanasena at Nadiā by a surprise attack in 1201 A.D. Lakshmanasena appears to have retreated into East Bengal after his defeat at the hands of Muhammad Bakhtyār Khalji. Muhammad Bakhtyār Khalji stayed at Nadiā for a short time only and swept northward to Gauḍa in Māldā district where he established his headquarters. He appears to have conquered the whole of Varendri very quickly, as we find him starting on his famous expedition to Tibet from the town of Devkoṭ (Bāngarh) in 1206 A.D. The Tibet expedition ended disastrously and Muhammad Bakhtyār Khalji was assassinated by 'Ali Mardān Khalji while he was lying ill at Devkoṭ (Bāngarh) on his return from the Tibet expedition. Muhammad Bakhtyār Khalji is said to have struck coins in his own name. Muhammad Shirān Khalji, one of the officers of Muhammad Bakhtyār Khalji, who had been stationed at Lakhnor or Nagar in Birbhum district, came back to Devkoṭ (Bāngarh) on receiving information about the death of Muhammad Bakhtyār Khalji. He defeated 'Ali Mardān and imprisoned him after which he was elected as the ruler of Lakhnāwati (Lakshmanāvati)*. 'Ali Mardān succeeded in escaping and fleeing to Delhi where he instigated Sultān Qutb-ud-din Aibak to send an army against Malik 'Izz-ud-din Muhammad Shirān Khalji. Qāe-māz-Rumi, the Governor of the province of Oudh, was ordered by Sultān Qutb-ud-din to proceed to Lakhnāwati to settle the dispute among the Khalji Amirs. Malik 'Izz-ud-din Muhammad Shirān evacuated Devkoṭ (Bāngarh) in the face of the advancing army and retreated eastward beyond the Punarbhavā river. Qāe-māz-Rumi occupied Devkoṭ (Bāngarh) and it was at his suggestion that Husām-ud-din 'Iwaz was appointed as the fief-holder of Devkoṭ (Bāngarh). The power of the Delhi Sultanate over Bengal was thus re-established.

'Ali Mardān, who had been instrumental in driving out Malik 'Izz-ud-din Muhammad Shirān, now made a reappearance in the politics of Bengal. In 1210 A.D. he obtained the vice-royalty of Lakhnāwati from Qutb-ud-din Aibak. 'Ali

* As is the usual practice, Gauḍa is spelt as Gaur, and Lakshmanāvati as Lakhnāwati wherever the names occur in connection with medieval history.

Mardān's reign was, however, shortlived and he was killed in 1213 A.D. by the Khalji nobles who elected Husām-ud-din 'Iwaz as ruler. Husām-ud-din 'Iwaz ruled for about fourteen years and took the title of Sultān Ghiyās-ud-din 'Iwaz Khalji. It was he who transferred the seat of Government from Devkoṭ (Bāngarh) to the historic city of Gaur-Lakhnāwati. He connected the two frontier towns of Devkoṭ (Bāngarh) and Lakhnor (in Birbhum district) by an unusually wide and high-embanked Grand Trunk Road with ferries on the big rivers like the Ganges on the Lakhnor side and the Mahānandā and the Punarbhavā on the other.

Sultān Ghiyās-ud-din 'Iwaz Khalji's title to the throne of Bengal was challenged by Sultān Iltutmish of Delhi, in 1225 A.D. In that year Sultān Iltutmish led an expedition into Bihar. The course of the expedition cannot be ascertained accurately, but it is said that the Sultān of Bengal entered into a treaty of peace with the Sultān of Delhi whereby he agreed to pay him as indemnity, treasure worth 80 lakhs of rupees and 38 elephants and to acknowledge the Sultān of Delhi as his overlord. The Sultān of Delhi is said to have put Malik Alauddin Jāni, his own nominee, in charge of the province of Bihar before returning to Delhi. But as soon as Sultān Iltutmish returned to Delhi the Bengal Sultān expelled the Delhi Sultān's nominee from Bihar. It does not therefore appear that the first campaign of Sultān Iltutmish against Sultān Ghiyās-ud-din 'Iwaz Khalji of Bengal was successful.

'Ali Mardān had thrown off the allegiance to Delhi, and Sultān Ghiyās-ud-din 'Iwaz Khalji ruled as an independent king till 1227 A.D. when he was defeated at the hands of Nāsir-ud-din, the eldest son of Sultān Iltutmish.

From 1227-87 A.D. no less than fifteen chiefs were in authority at Lakhnāwati and of them ten were Mamluks of the Imperial Court of Delhi.

"The history of this period is a sickening record of internal dissensions, usurpations and murders which the Court of Delhi after the death of Sultan Iltutmish could not punish. The seizure of the government of Lakhnawati was the highest ambition of the governors of neighbouring provinces, Bihar, Oudh, Kanauj and Kārā-Mānikpur; because even after the loss of independence, Gaur-Lakhnawati retained its status of a kingdom, and its possession alone entitled a Malik to the coveted status of *Malik-ush-Sharq* or Lord of the East. Here in Bengal the political maxim gained ground that whosoever could kill or oust the reigning ruler should be acknowledged without demur as its legitimate master and the Bengalees, whether Turks or Hindus, remained generally indifferent to the fate of their rulers and enunciated a constitutional principle of their own that the loyalty of a subject was due to the *masnad* (throne), and not to the person who happened to occupy it." (*The History of Bengal, Volume II, Chapter II*).

Some of these local rulers declared their independence, but all of them ultimately had to submit to the authority of Delhi. It was with a view to prevent the recurrence of these rebellions that Ghiyās-ud-din Balban sent down Amin Khān as Governor of Bengal with Tughril Khān as his deputy. Tughril Khān, however, defeated Amin Khān and established himself as the master of Bengal under the title of Sultān Mughisuddin. Sultān Balban was greatly enraged when he came to know of Tughril Khān's rebellion. According to Ziyā-ud-din Barani, the Sultān lost his sleep and appetite on account of his anger. Sultān Mughisuddin appears to have been popular both with Hindus and Muslims and thus he had almost the whole country behind him when he fought against Balban. As is well-known, Balban could not secure an easy victory over Tughril. The first expedition in 1278 A.D. against Tughril sent under the Governor of Oudh had to accept defeat at the hands of Tughril. Balban himself thereafter came to Bengal with a mighty army and eventually succeeded in defeating and killing Tughril with the help of Danuj Rāi of Sonārgāon. Balban left his youngest son, Bughrā Khān, as the Governor of Bengal in 1282 A.D.

Bughrā Khān took the title of Sultān Nāsir-ud-din. He declared his independence of Delhi, and his independence was accepted by Sultān Kaiqubād who was his own son. Under him Bengal was divided into four governorships of Bihar, Saptagrām, Bang and Devkoṭ. It was during the reign of Sultān Rukn-ud-din Kaikāūs, the son of Sultān Nāsir-ud-din, that a mosque was constructed at Devkoṭ. Bengal continued to enjoy independence till Sultān Ghiyās-ud-din Tughluq Shāh reduced it again to a province of his empire. When Muhammad Bin Tughluq began his reign in 1328 A.D. he divided Bengal into three parts, one officer being stationed at Lakhnāwati, one at Sātgāon and another at Sonārgāon, and this arrangement worked for some time until as a result of internal dissensions and warfare one Hāji Ilyās Shāh succeeded in establishing himself as the master of the whole of

1342 A.D.— 1487 A.D.

Bengal. Hāji Ilyās Shāh came to be known as Sultān Shams-ud-din Ilyās Shāh and his rule began in 1342 A.D. Shams-ud-din Ilyās Shāh conquered Tirhut and led a plundering expedition into Nepal. He also led a plundering expedition through Orissa up to the Chilkā lake and returned with an immense amount of booty. At this time Firuz Shāh Tughluq was the Sultān of Delhi. Shams-ud-din Ilyās Shāh had to defend his newly established kingdom against the attack of Sultān Firuz Tughluq who invaded Bengal with a huge army in 1353 A.D. The imperial army of Delhi succeeded in entering Bengal and occupying the town of Pānduā or Firuzābād in the Māldā district. Sultān Shams-ud-din took refuge in the fortress of Ekdālā on the approach of the imperial army. The fortress of Ekdālā was situated between the rivers Bāliā and Chhirāmati in West Dinājpur district.

Finding that he could not conquer the fortress of Ekdālā, Firuz Shāh Tughluq by a ruse made the Bengal army come out on the plains and in the battle that followed, completely defeated the Bengal army which included a large number of *pāiks* or Hindu infantry. It is, however, rather strange that Shams-ud-din Ilyās Shāh was allowed to retain his kingdom of Bengal even after he was defeated by Firuz Shāh Tughluq who returned to Delhi. Shams-ud-din Ilyās Shāh was succeeded by his son, Sikandar Shāh, in 1357 A.D. Bengal was again invaded by Firuz Tughluq in 1359 A.D. and again the fort of Ekdālā proved an obstacle which the imperial army could not surmount. The campaign ended with a treaty of peace between Firuz Tughluq and Sikandar Shāh. Sikandar Shāh ruled till 1389 A.D., in which year he was defeated and slain by one of his sons, Ghiyās-ud-din A'zam Shāh, who had earlier fled to Sonārgāon and declared independence there. The Ilyās Shāhi dynasty ruled over Bengal till 1487 A.D., in which year Sultān Jalāl-ud-din Fath Shāh, the last of the line, was murdered by one of his nobles. There was a short interregnum of a few years during which the Ilyās Shāhi dynasty was supplanted by one Rājā Ganesh who was one of the nobles in the court of the then Ilyās Shāhi king. This Rājā Ganesh took the title of Danujamardana-deva on his accession to the throne. His son Jadu was converted to Islam and ruled as Jalāl-ud-din. No inscription of Ganesh or Jalāl-ud-din or of the latter's son, Shams-ud-din Ahmad, appears to have been discovered as yet. So it is not possible to give any authentic account of the reigns of Rājā Ganesh and his son and grandson. According to Sir Jadunath Sarkar, Ganesh was a baron of Dinājpur who had an independent and hereditary source of strength in his large ancestral estate and personal contingent of troops not in the Sultān's pay. Among the nobles at court, his position was conspicuous on account of his ability, experience and material resources. He probably took a significant part in the selection of some of the minor princes to succeed the deceased Sultān. In the end he himself assumed the crown in 817 A.H. after the last Ilyās Shāhi prince, Alā-ud-din Firuz Shāh, met his death, possibly in a palace intrigue. This usurpation was apparently not favoured by the other nobles, most of whom were Muslims, and they invited the Jaunpur king into Bengal to oust Rājā Ganesh. But the king of Jaunpur could not apparently remove Ganesh from the throne, and there was a treaty between the two. The terms of the treaty perhaps included a promise by Ganesh to convert his son to Islam. Ganesh probably tried to bring his son back to the Hindu fold by making him pass through a purificatory ceremony, but it seems that the Hindu society of that time did not acknowledge that re-conversion. On the death of Ganesh, Jadusen or Jalāl-ud-din again embraced Islam. He is popularly believed to have ruthlessly

oppressed the Hindus. But according to Firishta the belief is unfounded. Firishta's opinion is supported by references to Jalāl-ud-din in some contemporary Sanskrit works. Jalāl-ud-din died probably in 1431 A.D. and was succeeded by his son, Shams-ud-din Ahmad Shāh. He was assassinated by two of his nobles, Shādi Khān and Nasir Khān in 1436 A.D.

The Ilyās Shāhi dynasty was again reinstated after the assassination of Shams-ud-din Ahmad Shāh, in the person of Nasir-ud-din Mahmud. This happened in 1437-38 A.D. He was succeeded by Rukn-ud-din Bārbak Shāh in 1459 A.D. Rukn-ud-din was succeeded by his son, Shams-ud-din Yusuf Shāh. He was succeeded by Sikandar, but Jalāl-ud-din Fath Shāh, a son of Sultān Nasir-ud-din Mahmud, ascended the throne after deposing Sikandar. Jalāl-ud-din Fath Shāh was assassinated by his discontented and angry palace-guards.

The Muslim conquerors of Bengal appear to have carried out a systematic policy of subjugating the local Hindu chiefs and of destroying temples and Hindu places of worship. They were helped in their work by numerous "saints" and *ghāzis* who acted as advance guards of the army in most areas. Their role was to pick up quarrel with the local Hindu chiefs on some pretext or other and then to bring in the army to uphold the glory of Islam. They also succeeded in winning over many Hindus to Islam by exhibition of so-called miracles. The Sultāns generously supported the *pirs*, *auliyas* and dervishes in their proselytising mission, and the conversions to Islam helped the Muslim conquerors to consolidate their position. A number of Hindu places of worship were converted into Muslim places of worship. But, in general, artistic activities like other activities appear to have received a serious set-back at the time of the Muslim conquest as no relic of the Muslim period up to the middle of the fourteenth century at least, has been found, from which it would be possible to assess the level reached by the artists and sculptors of those times in this region.

The Moorish traveller, Ibn Batutah, visited Bengal in 1345-46 A.D., i.e., nearly 150 years after the defeat of Lakshmanasena at the hands of Muhammad Bakhtyār Khalji. He reported that the *fakirs* could travel by boat free of any charges and provisions were supplied to those who needed them, and when they appeared in a town they were received with gifts of half a *dinār*. He also mentions the presence of numerous mendicants and Sufis who had made Bengal a centre of active religious propaganda. Goods were in abundance and could be had at very low prices. In fact, according to Ibn Batutah, he had nowhere else in the world seen such low prices, as in Bengal. Rice could be had at the rate of Rs. 7 for 8¼ maunds in terms of modern money, paddy at the rate of Rs. 7 for 28 maunds, 14 seers of ghee could be had at Rs. 3 As. 8, 14 seers of rose water at Rs. 7, 14 seers

of sugar could be had at Rs. 3 As. 8, 8 fat fowls fetched only 14 annas, one fat ram only Rs. 1/12, and one milch cow could be had at Rs. 21, cotton fabrics of the finest texture—15 yards in length—could be had at Rs. 14. There was an open trading in slaves.

The Hindus, according to Ibn Batutah, were mulcted of half their crops and had to pay taxes over and above that. Traffic mainly was waterborne. Ibn Batutah's account related mostly to East Bengal but it is reasonable to assume that the conditions portrayed by him would have applied equally to North Bengal.

The Ilyās Shāhi Sultāns reigned for a pretty long time, and during this period Bengal lost active contact with the rest of India. As a result the Sultāns came to regard Bengal as their native land, and people accepted them as their king. Relations between the Hindus and Muslims attained some stability and we find Hindus accepted as nobles in the court of the Ilyās Shāhi kings. Rājā Ganesh, who, at one time, ousted the Ilyās Shāhi dynasty, was a noble in the court of an Ilyās Shāhi Sultān. One of the Sultāns, Rukn-ud-din Bārbak, showed great interest in Bengali literature.

1487 A.D.—1574 A.D.

The six years intervening between 1487 A.D., in which year Jalāl-ud-din Fath Shāh was murdered, and 1493 A.D., the year in which Alā-ud-din Husain Shāh ascended the throne of Bengal, were years of turmoil. Jalāl-ud-din Fath Shāh's father, Rukn-ud-din Bārbak Shāh had brought into Bengal about eight thousand Abyssinian slaves whom he employed in most of the key positions of the State. The Abyssinians virtually ruled Bengal during these six years, until the last of them—Shams-ud-din Muzaffar (Sidi Badr Diwāna)—was put to death by Sayyid Husain who was the *wazir*. Sayyid Husain put himself at the head of the people who had risen against Shams-ud-din Muzaffar and he was helped in his task by the *pāiks*. Sayyid Husain ascended the throne of Bengal under the title of Alā-ud-din Husain Shāh. Alā-ud-din Husain Shāh was an Arab, who came to Bengal with his father Sayyid Ashraf. He was a great patron of Bengali literature. In Bengal his name is even now a household word symbolising good government. During his time Ekdālā became the seat of government. He banished all the Abyssinians from his kingdom and recalled the old Hindu and Muslim nobles to his court. By this time animosity between the Muslim colonisers and the local Hindu residents had almost completely disappeared,—proof of which is found in the employment of Hindus in high offices during the reign of Alā-ud-din Husain Shāh. Alā-ud-din Husain Shāh, who ascended the throne in 1493 A.D., founded the Husain Shāhi dynasty.

Alā-ud-din Husain Shāh reigned till 1519 A.D. He was succeeded by his son Nusrat Shāh. He reigned till 1532 A.D. In 1494 A.D. Sikandar Lodi of Delhi defeated the Sultān of

Jaunpur. The Sultān of Jaunpur fled for refuge to Bengal and it was thanks to Alā-ud-din Husain Shāh's diplomacy and strength that Sikandar Lodi entered into a non-aggression pact with him. Alā-ud-din Husain Shāh's son Nusrat Shāh had to tackle the situation arising out of Bābur's victory over Sikandar Lodi and he also succeeded in retaining the independence of Bengal. The dynasty founded by Alā-ud-din Husain Shāh came to an end in 1538 A.D. when Bengal passed into the hands of Sher Shāh, the Afghān. Sher Shāh's successor on the throne of Delhi was Islām Shāh. It was during his reign that the Viceroy of Bengal declared his independence and took the title of Shams-ud-din Muhammad Shāh Ghāzi. He was defeated and slain by a force sent by Islām Shāh under Himu, but his son ultimately established himself in Bengal under the title of Ghiyās-ud-din Bahādur Shāh. His rule was short-lived and ultimately the throne of Bengal was occupied by Tāj Khān Karrāni in 1564 A.D. The house of Karrāni ruled Bengal until Dāud Karrāni, the last of the line, was defeated by Akbar's general, Mun'im Khān, in 1574 A.D., and was driven into Orissa.

Mughul period, 1574 A.D.—1757 A.D.

Akbar's general, Mun'im Khān, entered Tāndā which was then the capital of Bengal and from there he sent out strong detachments in various directions, one of the detachments being sent to Ghorāghāt. The Afghan *jāgirdār* was defeated and slain and his followers were driven into Cooch Behār. The Mughul power could not, however, be established in Bengal immediately as the local Afghān and Hindu chiefs fought the Mughul forces whenever opportunity offered. In fact, Mun'im Khān had to recover Ghorāghāt afresh after his victory over Dāud in Orissa, as the Mughul outpost at Ghorāghāt had been driven out by Kālāpāhār. Mun'im Khān died in 1575 A.D. at Tāndā. He had shifted to the deserted city of Gaur where an epidemic broke out, killing his men by the hundreds. The survivors fled to Bihar but Mun'im Khān returned to Tāndā where he died. The conditions did not improve under Khān-i-Jahān, the next Governor of Bengal. Muzaffar Khān Turbati, who succeeded to the Governorship on Khān-i-Jahān's demise was put to death by rebel officers. Bengal was finally conquered by the armies of Akbar in 1585 A.D. A policy of conciliation was followed and most of the Afghān chiefs were won over to the Mughul side by Akbar's General, Shahbaz Khān. The district of West Dinājpur naturally was also a scene of warfare. One Tahir Ilanchaq scored a success over the imperial forces at Tājpur (West Dinājpur), but he was ultimately defeated. By 1587 A.D. the conquest of Bengal may be said to have been completed and in that year imperial officers like the *sipāh sālār*, the *diwān*, the *bakhshi*, etc. were posted to Bengal. Rājā Mān Singh was appointed as Viceroy of Bengal in 1594 A.D.

During the reign of Akbar, the district of West Dinājpur

was probably contained within the *sarkārs* of Tājpur and Pinjāra.

There were twenty-nine Viceroys between 1574 A.D. and 1727 A.D., of whom three were imperial princes, viz., Prince Muhammad Shujā, son of Shāh Jahān, Prince Muhammad 'A'zam, son of Aurangzeb, and Prince 'Azim-us-Shān, grandson of Aurangzeb. The last Viceroy, Murshid Quli Khān became virtually independent on account of the weakness of the Emperor of Delhi. His four successors, Shujā-ud-din, Sarfarāz Khān, 'Ālivardi Khān and Sirāj-ud-daulah practically ruled as independent Nawābs. No incident worthy of note appears to have taken place in the district of West Dinājpur during this long period of about two hundred years, during which Bengal remained under the sway of the Mughuls.

(c) MODERN PERIOD

1765 A.D.—1947 A.D.

The district came under the control of the East India Company in 1765, the year in which the East India Company obtained the *Diwāni* of Bengal. The acquisition of the *Diwāni* by the East India Company did not bring about any major change in the administrative machinery as they wanted to remain content with the surplus revenue of Bengal, after meeting their obligations to the Nawāb and the Emperor Shāh 'Ālam. They, therefore, appointed Muhammad Rezā Khān as their *Nāib* or deputy at Murshidābād. In order to acquire control over the administration, they had forced Najm-ud-daulah, Mir Jāfar's son, to consent to the appointment of the same Muhammad Rezā Khān as his deputy as well, before agreeing to recognize his succession to the *musnud*. A Resident was appointed at Murshidābāb to supervise the work of Muhammad Rezā Khān in regard to revenue collection but such supervision must have been purely nominal, as we find the Court of Directors, in 1768, laying the blame for short collection of the revenue of Dinājpur and some other districts on the Nawāb and Muhammad Rezā Khān. In July, 1768, an *Aumil* (*Āmil*)—one Braja Mohan Mitra (Buzi Mohun Metre)—was appointed for collection of revenue of the Dinājpur district. A change in this system was brought about during the Governorship of Verelst. It was then decided to associate the Company's servants in the collection of revenue in the districts. In consequence of this plan Mr. H. Cottrell was appointed the Supravisor. The Supravisors were not only to supervise the collection of revenue but to gather detailed information on every aspect of the district with particular stress on the revenue system. They had to work under the supervision of the Resident of Murshidābād. In 1770, a Comptrolling Council was established at Murshidābād. This measure was presumably taken after the great famine of 1770 as a measure of administrative efficiency. Muhammad Rezā

Khān was removed from his office in pursuance of a directive issued by the Court of Directors in 1771, and the East India Company declared their intention to stand forth as the *Dīwān*, and, by the agency of the Company's servants, to take upon themselves the entire care and management of the revenue. A Proclamation was issued on the 11th May, 1772, in Calcutta informing the public that the Court of Directors had been pleased to divest Muhammad Rezā Khān of the station of *Nāib Dīwān*. In 1772, Warren Hastings arrived in Bengal as Governor and President of the Council at Fort William, and, on the 14th May, 1772, decided on a policy in regard to the carrying out of the mandate of the Court of Directors to stand forth as the *Dīwān*. It was decided that a Committee of Circuit consisting of the Governor and four members of the Council was to be appointed to visit the principal districts and to form the settlement for five years. The lands were to be let out to revenue farmers for a period of five years. The Supravisors were to be called Collectors, and they were to be assisted by an Indian officer called *Dīwān*. The Committee of Circuit visited Dinājpur in January, 1773. The Comptrolling Council of Revenue was replaced in 1772 by the Committee of Revenue with the Governor as the President. In 1773, the Court of Directors ordered that the English Collectors should be withdrawn. The Governor and the Council were authorised to substitute some other plan of making themselves acquainted with the exact value of every district and giving relief to the inhabitants until some lasting arrangement could be devised. The reason for the decision to withdraw the Collectors from the districts is rather interesting. It was expressed as follows by the Court of Directors:

> "As the sending our junior servants into the provinces as Supravisors has not been attended with the wished for success, but has enabled them to monopolize the whole trade of the country, we, therefore, direct that they may be withdrawn as soon as possible, and we leave it to you to substitute some other plan . . ."

The Governor and Council, therefore, decided that each district was to be superintended by a *Dīwān* or *Aumil* except such as had been let entire to the *zamindārs* or responsible farmers, who, in such case, were invested with that authority. A Committee of Revenue was to be formed at the Presidency consisting of two members of the Board and three senior servants below the Council. The *Dīwān* was to correspond with the President of the Committee and the *Rāy Rāyān*. Occasional Commissioners, or Inspectors, were to be deputed for local investigation, if necessary, and they were to be chosen from among the Company's servants. Five Provincial Councils were set up, each consisting of a Chief, four senior servants, Persian Translator, Accountant and assistants, and a *Dīwān* appointed by the Government. The Provincial

Councils were to correspond with the Governor and Council in the Revenue Department, and the *Diwān* with the *Rāy Rāyān*. There was to be a Provincial Council at Dinājpur having charge of the districts of Dinājpur, Silberries, Purneā, Rangpur, Edrāckpur, Bāhārbund, Cooch Behār, and Rāngāmāti.

In 1780, a *Mufassal Diwāni Ādālat* was established at Tājpur having jurisdiction over Hāveli Pinjerāh or Dinājpur, part of Purneā, the district of Māldā and part of Rājshāhi, east of the Ganges. This *Diwāni Ādālat* was presided over by a Covenanted Civil Servant of the East India Company styled Judge. These *Diwāni Ādālats* functioned under the supervision of the *Sadar Diwāni Ādālat* at Calcutta which was presided over by Sir Elijah Impey. Sir Elijah Impey, who was also the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Judicature in Calcutta, had to relinquish the superintendence of the *Sadar Diwāni Ādālat* in November, 1782, when the Governor-General and Council took over this duty. In 1780 A.D. the Rājā of Dinājpur died without an heir and his widow, Rāni Saraswati, adopted a young boy named Radhanath and acted as the guardian of the minor. Taking advantage of the tender age of the new Mahārājā, the East India Company farmed out the *zamindāri* to one Devi Singh to ensure collection of revenue. Devi Singh by his exactions and oppressions drove the peasantry into rebellion. The rebellion assumed such magnitude that troops had to be called in and many persons were severely punished or executed before law and order could be re-established.

In the reign of Akbar we find the first authentic traces of the great *zamindāri* family of Dinājpur, with which for the next two centuries the history of the district is closely interwoven. To quote Mr. Westmacott:

> "In A.D. 1600, Akbar divided the Empire into fifteen Soobas, and made his son Selim Soobadar of Bengal. The Sooba was divided into twenty-four Sarkars, and parts of six of these Sarkars fall within the limits of the district of Dinagepoor. About the time of Akbar's settlement there was at Dinagepoor, ... a man, ... in possession of a considerable part of what are now the districts of Dinagepoor and Maldah. Buchanan calls him Kasi, but, whether he is correct or not, the name is now utterly forgotten. His grave is shown at the door of the *mondeer* in the Rajbaree, and offerings of cloth, curds, rice, and plantains are regularly made upon it. His life is reputed to have been very holy, and he is spoken of as a Brahmocharee, Mohonto, or Gosain. It is said that the nucleus of his estate was certain land with which an image of Kalee, named Kalika, and worshipped to this day, was endowed; and that in addition to this he became possessed of an image of Krishno named Kaliya, endowed with the whole of

> the Sarkar, or Havelee, of Panjara. The estate of Dinagepore was frequently spoken of as Havelee Panjara, even when it included land in several other Sarkars. Had the estate really been a debuttar, or endowment of gods, Raja Radhanath would probably have brought the fact forward as an argument, when in A.D. 1798 he urged all in his power to prevent the sale of the land on which the Rajbaree and family temples stood; but he does not mention it, and it is probably a tradition of recent origin. It is much more probable that the estate dated from earlier times. . . . . "

It appears that this *brahmachāri* left his estate to a disciple, Srimanta Datta Chaudhuri, a Kāyastha householder, who came originally from the east. He had a son and a daughter, but the former dying without issue the estates fell to Sukdeb, the daughter's son. Westmacott describes this property according to the *thana* divisions as they existed in his time as follows:

> "Including the whole of Thana Thakoorgaon in the north, the western boundary passes through Ranisonkoil, taking in Pergunna Borogaon, but excluding Kholora and Maldwar, and through Hemtabad, including Mohasoo, but not Tajpoor, nor any part of Thana Kaliagunj except the northern corner which falls within Pergunna Bajitpoor. This line excludes the estates of Maldwar, Tajpoor, Horeepoor, and Chooramon, which were added to the Collectorate of Dinagepoor, A.D. 1793, but never formed any part of the zamindar's property. Passing southwards, the boundary takes in half of Thana Bongshiharee, and from Kordaho runs eastward, excluding Pergunna Kordaho, across the middle of Thana Gongarampoor, through Patiram, excluding Pergunna Sontosh, and then finally turns northwards towards Thakoorgaon, including the whole of the Thanas Chintamon Rajarampoor, Peergunj, and Beergunj. The northern and central part of the estate was in Akbar's Sarkar Panjara, the western in Sarkar Tajpoor, and Bongshiharee and part of Gongarampoor in Sarkar Jonotabad. Besides the lands within this boundary, much of the northern part of the district of Maldah, including the old city of that name, belonged to the estate.
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> "In the time of Sookdeb, or of his father, the family of Khetlal became extinct, and its estates were divided, seven-sixteenths coming to Sookdeb Roy, whose father and grandfather may have inherited the office of Dewan from their ancestor, and the remaining nine-sixteenths falling to another officer who founded the family of Bordonkootee or Idrakpoor, still in existence. The lands thus added to the estate are in Sarkar Ghoraghat and comprise the Thanas of Nowabgunj and Ghoraghat, and in Bogra the Thanas Khetlal, Sheebgunj, Panchbibee,

Bodolgachee, and Adamdighee and perhaps more. Buchanan says that Pergunna Khatta in Bodolgachee was conquered and divided by the Rajas of Nattore and Dinagepoor in Ramnath's time; and that Pergunna Khangor in Panchbibee was a joint acquisition with the Jahangirpoor family, in Ramnath's time; but Raja Gobindonath makes them part of Sookdeb's property. The zemindars of Dinagepoor and Idrakpoor, in place of dividing the lands, each retained a share in every village, which caused much inconvenience when in after days the one estate was under the Collectorate of Dinagepoor, while the other was under Rungpoor. Sookdeb Roy died A.D. 1677. It is said that the extent of his possessions induced the Mahomedans to bestow upon him the title of Raja but the sunnud is no longer in existence. Nothing is known of his personal character, or of his history; he perpetuated his name by digging the tank of Sookhsagor, or the 'Sea of Pleasure'."

Sukdeb left three sons of whom the eldest died young, the second ruled for five years from 1677-1682 A.D., and was succeeded by the youngest, Prannath, who ruled for forty years. A *sanad* dated 1679 A.D., granted by Prince Muhammad 'Azim-ud-din in the reign of the Emperor Ālamgir, is still preserved in the *rājbāri*, in which the succession of some one to Sukdeb's property is recorded. Unfortunately the name of this successor is obliterated. The Rājā of Dinājpur was permitted to rule undisturbed over some three-quarters of a million of people, on condition of paying a certain portion of his revenues to the *Subahdār* of Bengal.

Prannath reigned for forty years and is credited with having made considerable additions to his ancestral property. He appears to have been a powerful and unscrupulous prince, and the additions referred to were probably acquired by force of arms. It is hard at this distance of time to ascertain exactly what these lands were, but tradition says that, besides *parganā* Māligāon forming the eastern half of *thana* Bangshihāri, and a considerable area in Māldā, he absorbed some twelve small estates which were surrounded by the Rāj property. He has commemorated his name in various parts of the district. Twelve miles south of Dinājpur town on the Murshidabad Road is a fine tank named Prānsāgar or 'Sea of Life' which he constructed. Twelve miles north of the town of Dinājpur, on the Darjeeling Road is the temple of Kāntanagar, built, though not finished, by this prince. It is picturesquely situated on the bank of the Dhepā, and is a fine specimen of the art of the time, being decorated all over with terra-cotta reliefs. In the course of centuries this temple fell into considerable disrepair and was greatly damaged by the 1897 earthquake. It was restored by the Mahārājā Girijanath Roy Bahadur. Prannath's favourite country seat is said to have been Prānnagar, on the road between Birganj and Thākurgāon, but the

remains of the original buildings have almost disappeared. Jagat Jiban Ghosal, the poet of *Manasāmangal,* lived in Dinājpur in Prannath's time.

According to James Grant, Murshid Quli Khān divided Bengal into thirteen *chāklās* or large divisions of territories, constituting an equal number of *faujdāri* and *āmildāri zilās* or civil and military jurisdictions compounded of the thirty-four ancient districts or *sarkārs* (of Shujā). This new administrative pattern superseded that of Todar Mall made in the reign of Emperor Akbar. Rājā Prannath was appointed a *chāklādār* and, in addition, enjoyed the special privilege of administering his own district without being like the other *zamindārs* subject either to *hustābood* investigations or to the immediate control of an *āmildār.* It may be mentioned that the duties of the *āmildār* were confined solely to the collection of revenue. Having no son, Prannath adopted a young relative named Ramnath, who on his succession to the *gadi* paid a succession fee of Rs. 4,21,450 to the *Subahdār* of Bengal. This prince is popularly supposed to have been more powerful and unscrupulous than his predecessor, and to have been in addition a warrior of considerable personal prowess. His mail shirt and spear were preserved in the *rājbāri* down to a late period. He seems further to have been a *persona grata* with the *Subahdār* of Bengal who granted him three *sanads*, conferring on him additional estates in *thanas* Patirām, Patnitalā and Gangārāmpur. Ramnath conquered and dispossessed the *zamindār* of Gobindanagar, near the present village of Thākurgāon, employing a Brāhmana to steal his protecting deity or family idol Gobinda, and thus causing his downfall. The conqueror subsequently constructed a canal connecting Gobindanagar on the Tāngan with Prānnagar near the Punarbhavā for the purpose of taking the idol backwards and forwards between the two places. This canal is still in existence and is called the Ramdānrā. Tradition says that in the reign of Ramnath, Sayyid Muhammad Khān, faujdār of Rangpur, stormed and plundered the *rājbāri,* near the town of Dinājpur, but whether the former drove him out, or came to terms with him, is not stated. In Stewart's *History of Bengal,* this faujdār of Rangpur is called "Saiyid Ahmed, the second son of Hajy Ahmed, who upon the succession of Shujaa Adeen Khan had been appointed Foujdar of Rangpur, and who is accused of having ruled that district with great oppression, having procured from Moorshudabad a considerable army, invaded Dinagepore and Couch Beyhar, and after compelling the Rajas to take refuge in the woods and mountains, got possession of those countries, together with the immense treasures which the Rajas and their ancestors had amassed." It is doubtful whether this catastrophe was so serious as Stewart makes out, as the Dinājpur Rāj is generally supposed to have attained its greatest splendour under Ramnath, who reigned for a long time after this. After the retirement of

the invaders, Ramnath reconstructed the *rājbāri*, and also dug the famous *Rāmsāgar* tank four miles (about six km) south of the town on the Murshidabad Road. At any rate, Ramnath was one of the *zamindārs* who helped Nawāb Ālivardi Khān with money when Bengal was attacked by the Marathas, and the high-handed action of Sayyid Āhmad, who was the *Faujdār* of Ghorāghāt and Rangpur during the reign of the preceding Nawāb Sarfarāz Khān, did not impair the relations of the Rājā with the Nawāb permanently. Rājā Ramnath died in 1760 A.D., and was succeeded by his son Baidyanath. The latter appears to have had some dispute with his other brothers about the succession to the property, as a manuscript signed by Mir Jāfar Khān, *Subahdār* of Bengal, is still preserved, in which Baidyanath is declared the rightful heir of his father. It appears that in 1762 A.D., Mir Kāsim farmed out the *zamindāri* of Dinājpur to one Ramnaut Baddie, who had been employed in the preceding year, in examining the assets of Dinājpur, for Rs. 26,44,733. This amount could not be realized and the farmer Ramnaut failed in his engagements. This arrangement of farming out the revenues was apparently a temporary expedient resorted to by Mir Kāsim for raising more money. Baidyanath is said to have been of a quiet disposition and rather weakminded, and to have allowed the Brāhmanas to get rather the upper hand of him.

In 1780 A.D., Rājā Baidyanath died without an heir, and his widow Rāni Saraswati adopted a young boy named Radhanath, and on payment of a succession fee of 730 *mohurs*, obtained from the British a *sanad* declaring Radhanath successor to Baidyanath. This *sanad* detailed the lands composing the estate, and was signed by Warren Hastings. During the minority of Rājā Radhanath the estates were managed first by Rājā Devi Singh of Dilwārpur, in Murshidābād, and afterwards by one Janaki Ram Singh, brother of Rāni Saraswati. The latter kept great state in the *rājbāri*, but failing to understand the strictness of the British revenue system fell into arrears with his payments, and was removed by orders of the Board of Revenue. In 1787 A.D. Ram Kanta Ray, a relative of the family, was installed as manager. He seems to have discharged his duties well, but had little influence with the young Rājā, whom his adoptive mother, incensed at the treatment meted out to her brother, Janaki Ram, did all in her power to alienate from the English.

Westmacott comments thus on this attitude of the Rāni:

> "The Ranee's feelings of hostility against the British rule are pardonable. Her husband for twenty years reigned almost as an independent prince, and after his death, her brother Janokee Ram had maintained an equal state. Suddenly her brother was called upon to pay his revenue with a punctuality never known

> before, and on default was sent in custody to Calcutta, and she never saw him again. The collections of the estate were taken entirely out of the hands of the family, and even the expense of repairs of the Rajbaree, and the monthly wages of the servants, were defrayed by Government officers without reference to her wishes. The herd of buffaloes belonging to the Rajbaree was sent to the uncultivated part of the district as a public nuisance, and many of the consecrated cattle were sold. The Ranee was not even allowed to take care of her adopted son, nine or ten years old, but he was made over for education to the manager, Ram Kanto Roy, for whom she had a strong personal aversion. At the same time the income of the zemindaree was being decreased by the abolition of all the illegal taxes and cesses which the Rajas had collected as long as she could remember, and by the determination of Government that the family charities were to be paid out of the privy purse and not out of the imperial revenue as heretofore. She was naturally in no temper to look on Mr. Hatch's reforms as beneficial, or to acquiesce in the action of Government."

In 1792 A.D. Rājā Radhanath was placed in charge of the estate, a year or so after the conclusion of the Decennial Settlement. The *jamā* at which the Settlement was made was fixed at *Siccā* Rs. 1,402,086 or equal to 72.5 per cent of the gross produce. It is therefore no wonder that the Rājā could not fulfil his engagements. In 1794 his seal was seized and was locked up in the Collectorate Treasury, and Ram Kanta Ray was again appointed manager. The Rājā appears to have been reinstated in about 1796 A.D., but in 1797 A.D. arrears of revenue accrued to the extent of some 70,000 rupees, and by the order of the Board of Revenue part of the estate was sold. In the years that followed, the revenue continued to be in arrears as a result of which further sales were effected, and the condition of the estate went from bad to worse. The Rājā struggled to save his estate by raising money on mortgages (one of the principal creditors being Ram Kanta Ray), and buying back parts of the estate under assumed names. His wife Rāni Tripura Sundari and the old Rāni Saraswati also purchased lands to a considerable extent. By the end of 1800 A.D. almost the whole estate had been alienated, and the Rājā was virtually a prisoner in his own house as his creditors were threatening to seize his person and to have him imprisoned.

The estate of the Mahārājā of Dinājpur practically disintegrated after Radhanath. The ruin of this ancient family records the most significant change that occurred in the district of Dinājpur after the East India Company took over its management. Either on account of greed or out of a set

policy the demand for land revenue was kept at a very high figure making it well-nigh impossible for any one to meet it for a sufficient length of time. The statement given below bears out the truth of the foregoing remarks:

	Bengali year	*Jamā*	Receipts
		Rs.	Rs.
	1179	1,755,710	1,405,585
	1180	1,828,061	1,352,150
	1181	1,460,444	1,239,236
	1182	1,460,444	1,275,968
	1183	1,460,444	1,275,968
	1184	1,460,444	1,275,968
	1185	1,460,444	1,275,968
	1186	1,460,444	1,275,968
	1187	1,460,444	1,275,968
	1188	1,660,444	1,660,444
	1189	1,660,444	1,660,444
	1190	1,460,444	1,275,968
	1191	1,460,444	1,275,968
	1192	1,460,444	1,313,468
1786 A.D.— 1787 A.D.	1193	1,460,444	1,385,945

The representatives in India of the East India Company probably did not think it wise to allow a powerful local magnate like the Mahārājā of Dinājpur to possess such a vast tract of land. They perhaps thought that with the weakening of the power and prestige of the Mahārājā of Dinājpur it would become easier for them to strengthen their hold over the region.

Rājā Radhanath died in 1801 A.D. at the early age of twenty-four. His widow adopted a child named Gobindanath who took over the family estate in 1817 A.D. Rājā Gobindanath appears to have been a capable man and did a great deal to restore order in the affairs of the family and to regain some of its lost possessions. He died in 1841 and was succeeded by his youngest son, Taraknath. Taraknath died childless in 1865, leaving his property to his widow, Rāni Shyamamohinee. The Rāni's adopted son was Girijanath. Girijanath was succeeded by his son, Mahārāj Jagadishnath, during whose life-time the district of Dinājpur was divided into two in accordance with the Radcliffe Award.

During the later half of the eighteenth century, the district was subjected to the plundering raids of the *sannyāsis* and *fakirs*. The *sannyāsis* traced their origin to some of the *dashnāmi* sects established by the disciples of Shankar-

āchāryya. These sects were named Puri, Giri, Parvata, Sagara, Vana, Aranya, Tirtha, Āsrama, Sarasvati and Bhārati. The members of these sects had a complete control over the *maths* or monasteries which had been set up by Shankarāchāryya and his disciples. With the passage of time, members of these sects took to the profession of arms, and local chieftains began to use them in their warfare. In 1567 Akbar witnessed a fight between armed *sannyāsis* of Giri and Puri sects at Thāneswar. The list of *sannyāsi* orders would be incomplete without mention of *nāgā sannyāsis* who went about naked but armed.

Warren Hastings recorded the following minute in 1773 about these *sannyāsis*:

> "He cannot learn that they have any fixed abodc, but that they chiefly frequent the countries lying at the foot of the chain of mountains which separate Hindustan from Tibbet, wandering continually from the Gogra river in the Domain of the Vizier (Oudh) to the Burramputter and from this line occasionaly penetrating into Euracpoor (Gorakhpur?), Butsea (Bettiah), Tirroot, Purnea, and Rungpur, he finds that except one sect among them called Hunjooghees who never mix with the hordes which infest their more civilized neighbours, they neither marry nor have families, but recruit their members by the stoutest of the children which they steal from the countries through which they pass, that some among them carry on trade in Diamonds, Coral and other articles of great price and small compass and often travel with great wealth--some subsist by gratuitous alms and the others the far greater by plunder: that the various sects of them travel at fixed periods on religious pilgrimages to the Burrumpooter, Byjenath (Baidyanath) and Ganga Saugore, besides those who in all dry months of the year pass through the provinces on their way to Juggernath (Puri) ; that individuals of them are at all times scattered about the villages and capital towns of the provinces and where the bigotry of the inhabitants afford them an access to their homes and every right of hospitality, which they are suspected of abusing in the most treacherous manner by reuniting with the Corps whenever they enter the country and giving information of the most substantial inhabitants and of the places where their wealth is deposited ; that they are continually seen on the roads armed with swords, lances, matchlocks and generally loaded with heavy bundles. The castes of Ramanondo and Goorea are excepted as they are not vagabonds nor plunderers but have fixed place of abode . . ."

Some of these *sannyāsis* settled down and acquired large properties in many places including Dinājpur district. So far

as the *fakirs* are concerned it may be recalled that the early Muslim colonisers actively patronised these *fakirs* and *auliyas*, the holy men of Islam, who acted as the vanguard of the army in the hitherto unconquered regions. The custom of giving presents to these *fakirs* and supplying them with provisions and travel facilities such as boats free of any charges, was in vogue among the Muslim conquerors. When they appeared in a town they were also received with gifts of half a *dinār*. The number of such *pirs* and *auliyas* was swelled in succeeding years by vagabonds who found in the garb of *pirs* an easy passport to wealth. Shāh Shujā while he was the *Subahdār* of Bengal gave a *sanad* to a *Burhānā fakir*, Janāb Shāh Sultān Hāsān Muriā Burhānā, by which the *fakir* was entitled within the countries of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa to confiscate properties to which there was no heir and rent-free tenures. The landlords and tenants residing in the tract of country through which the *fakir* might pass were directed to supply him with provisions. The *fakir* was also allowed to go anywhere he pleased with his retinue and go in a procession with banners, standards, etc. The weakening of the ruling power emboldened these *fakirs* to take to large scale oppression of the peasantry.

These *sannyāsis* and *fakirs* used to enter the district from places in Western India ostensibly for pilgrimage but, in reality, to amass riches by plundering the people. One noted dacoit and *fakir* named Majnu Shāh had his head-quarters at Makhanpur in the Kanauj district of Uttar Pradesh.

Warren Hastings succeeded in curbing the activities of the *sannyāsis* but the *fakirs* continued to oppress the people of the district even as late as 1799. In that year Rājā Radhanath of Dinājpur wrote to the Collector of Dinājpur as follows:

> "The plundering Fakeers with a number of armed men are in the habit of annually committing depredations in the Pergannahs belonging to my zemindary, plundering the houses of ryots and taking away the revenue from the cutchery and also of murdering and wounding the inhabitants, burning their houses and carrying them to the hills. In this manner they carry on their oppression My Pergunnahs are therefore depopulated and I am unable to collect the Revenue. I am therefore hopeful that you will forward this petition to the Huzzoor that necessary steps may be taken against the like depredations in future; the ryotts will then remain undisturbed and pay their revenue."

The East India Company took vigorous measures, employing detachments of the Army to bring these marauders to book and finally by the beginning of the nineteenth century succeeded in ultimately stamping out these banditti. The British rule thus brought peace to the country side.

The Provincial Councils which had been established in 1773 were abolished in 1781, in which year the Collectors were reposted to districts. In that year the Judges of the *Mufassal Diwāni Ādālat* were also appointed as Magistrates, and the Collectors were thus left with the task of revenue collection and of acting as a civil court in revenue matters only. In May, 1786, Mr. George Hatch was appointed Collector of Dinājpur but had taken over charge on the 19th January, 1786. Prior to his appointment as Collector of the district, Mr. Hatch was the Collector of the *zamindāri* of Dinājpur. In December that year, he was also appointed the Judge of the *Diwāni Ādālat* which was from that time onward to exercise jurisdiction only over the district of Dinājpur, and took over charge on the 1st February, 1787. In April, 1787, the boundary of the district was readjusted in accordance with the plan of the Governor-General-in-Council to form a new arrangement of the country into Collector-ships, and Mr. Hatch was again appointed Judge, Magistrate and Collector. He could not, however, as Magistrate try criminal cases of a serious nature, which continued to be disposed of by an officer styled the *Dārogā*. The Collector used to be assisted in his work by a *Diwān*. It was in 1786 that the Civil Surgeon, known at that time only as the Surgeon, was appointed. It is interesting to note that the gentleman appointed, one Mr. Ross, was selected because he had been the physician of Mr. Hatch at a previous station and knew about the constitution of Mr. Hatch.

In 1790, Lord Cornwallis, the Governor-General-in-Council took over the superintendence of the administration of criminal justice. The *Nizāmat Ādālat* was thereupon removed to Calcutta from Murshidābād and consisted of the Governor-General and members of the Supreme Council, assisted by the Head *Kāzi* and two *Mufti*s. The Courts of Circuit subordinate to the *Nizāmat Ādālat*, were established for trial of offences not triable by Magistrates. The country was divided into divisions and a Court of Circuit had jurisdiction over a division. The district of Dinājpur was included in the Murshidābād Division which consisted of the districts of Bhāgalpur and Purneā, Dinājpur, Rangpur and Rājshāhi, Birbhum, and the city of Murshidābād. The Judges of the Court of Circuit were required to hold a general jail delivery once in six months. The elements of modern administration were thus created during the Governor-Generalship of Warren Hastings and Lord Cornwallis. In May, 1793, the Collectors in Bengal were divested of all judicial and magisterial powers and were made responsible for the collection of revenue alone. A new post of Judge and Magistrate was created. The officer appointed to this post took over all the magisterial functions previously exercised by the Collector and in addition, disposed of all civil cases. This arrangement continued till 1829 in which year it was decided to

appoint Commissioners of Revenue and Circuit. Each Commissioner was placed in charge of a Division consisting of several districts. He superintended the work of the Collector and the Judge-Magistrate. The Commissioner was also a Sessions Judge and held assizes in each district of his Division. In 1831 Sessions work was transferred from the Commissioners to the District Judges who made over their magisterial duties to the Collectors, but in 1837 it was decided once more to divide the function of Collectors, and the district administration was carried on by a Civil and Sessions Judge, a Collector and a Magistrate. Halliday who was the first Lieutenant-Governor, suggested combination of the offices of Magistrate and Collector, and after the suggestion was endorsed by the Secretary of State in 1859, the post of Magistrate-Collector was again revived. Sir George Campbell, who was the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal in 1871-74, found that the Magistrate-Collector of a district had become more a drudge and less a master on account of the creation of many departments. It is he who was responsible for making the Magistrate-Collector the sole representative of the Government in the district.

In the early part of the last century there were many indigo factories in the district, but the business does not seem to have ever been a very paying one, and the factories have long since disappeared, though the remains of old vats may still be seen here and there buried in jungle. The planters did not usually grow their own indigo, but got the *rāyats* to grow it for them in consideration of advances made to them for the purpose. The growing of indigo never became popular with the cultivators, as the landlords were against it and put an end to all chances of profit by exacting an extra heavy rent for land on which indigo was grown. The indigo-planters were unpopular with both landlords and *rāyats*, the former alleging that they were quarrelsome and overbearing in their manners and fond of interfering between themselves and their *rāyats*, while the latter accused them of compelling them to grow indigo against their will and complained that the factory *āmlās* cheated when measuring land and weighing the crop. The planters retorted by saying that the reason for their unpopularity with the *zamindārs* was that the presence of members of the dominant race on their estates affected the prestige of these latter with the cultivators and prevented them from resorting so freely to the illegal extortions of which they were so fond. It is impossible to judge, at this distance of time, what the rights of the matter were, but it seems probable that the presence in the district of a body of Europeans who were not amenable, in virtue of their nationality, to the laws of the Company, must have hampered the district authorities considerably. The names of two of the earliest indigo-planters have come down to us. They were Mr. (later Dr.) Carey and Mr. Thomas who in 1794

established factories at Madnābāti and Mahipāldighi respectively, with funds furnished by a Mr. Udny, an indigo-planter of Māldā. Both Strong in his Gazetteer of Dinājpur and Lambourn in his Gazetteer of Māldā stated that Madnābāti, where the famous missionary William Carey stayed at one time, was situated in the district of Dinājpur. It may be recalled that the District Gazetteer of Dinājpur was published in 1912 while that of Māldā was published in 1918. As there is only one record of transfer of some villages from the district of Dinājpur to Māldā after 1918 and as these villages were originally situated in police stations of Porshā and Tapan and not in Bangshihāri of the district of Dinājpur, it is only reasonable to conclude that the village of Madnābāti was not involved in this transfer. (Reference: Notification No. 49 Pl dated the 8th January, 1941). On enquiry from the Collectors of West Dinājpur and Māldā, reports were received which tended to show that Madnābāti was situated in the Bāmangolā police station in the district of Māldā. A claim to this effect was also made by the Chairman of the Māldā District Board. There is no *mouza* of the name of Madnābāti. According to the report of the Sub-Divisional Officer, Malda, a copy of which was forwarded by the District Magistrate, Malda, it appears that an area consisting of parts of the *mouzas* Uttar Kasba, Ganigara and Khoksan in police station Bāmangolā, is locally known as Madnābāti. Local tradition associates this place with William Carey. But it is rather curious that none of the *mouzas* which were transferred from the police stations of Porshā and Tapan in the district of Dinājpur to the police station of Bāmangolā in the district of Māldā in pursuance of Notification No. 49 Pl dated the 8th January. 1941, was named Uttar Kasba or Kasba or Ganigara or Khoksan. On the other hand, it appears from page 182 of the *Memoir of William Carey* by Eustace Carey that Madnābāti was 32 miles (about 51 km) north of Māldā in a straight line but nearly 70 miles (about 113 km) by water and was upon the river Tāngan. Again, at page 190 of the same book William Carey has said:

> "My place is about thirty miles further north,* and Mr. T.'s** sixteen or seventeen miles further than mine. We are situated between the rivers Tanquam† and Purnabudda,‡ in the district of Dinagepore, and within a hundred and twenty miles of Tibet. The name of my place is Mudnabatty, that of Mr. T. Moypaldiggy."

If the distance from Mahipāldighi or from Māldā is measured off on a modern map of West Bengal, it is seen

* from Māldā.
** Mr. Thomas's.
† Tāngan.
‡ Punarbhavā.

that Madnābāti must have been located just within the district of West Dinājpur in the police station of Bangshihāri. So far as the existence of ruins of old buildings in the *mouza* of Uttar Kasba, etc., are concerned, those might very well have belonged to some other indigo factory and not necessarily to the one of which Dr. William Carey was in charge. Both Dr. William Carey and Mr. Thomas established the factories at Madnābāti and Mahipāldighi respectively, in 1794 with funds furnished by a Mr. Udny, an indigo-planter of Māldā. Both of the first-mentioned gentlemen were Baptist Missionaries and seem to have combined planting and indigo manufacture with missionary work. Mr. Thomas was also a medical man, while Mr. Carey was something of a botanist and expert in agriculture; his "Remarks on the state of agriculture in the district of Dinajpur" was published in Volume 10 of the Asiatick Researches. The latter established at Madnābāti a printing press for printing books in Bengali, but, as types in Bengali were not immediately available, it could not be utilised till Mr. Carey shifted it in 1799 to Serampore, his new centre of work. While at Madnābāti, Mr. Carey also translated the Bible into Bengali. In 1796, the missionaries converted and baptized a Mr. Fernandez, a gentleman of Portuguese extraction and independent means, who from that time on till his death in 1830 was the mainstay of missionary work in Dinājpur. All these gentlemen were attached to the Baptist Mission Society, and they raised a considerable native church.

The Rebellion of 1857 left the district undisturbed. The most important result of the Rebellion was that the administration of the affairs of India was taken over by the British Government and the East India Company ceased to exist.

The administration of the British, no doubt, had secured peace and some kind of justice to the inhabitants but the discrimination that was made between Englishmen and Indians in various spheres of administration gradually built up a store of resentment against the British Government. On the 8th July, 1905, Reuter published a report that the Secretary of State had given his assent to the Government of India's new scheme of Partition of Bengal into two parts with the exception of the Dārjeeling district, by separating Dāccā and Chittāgong Divisions to form a new province of East Bengal and Assam. This proposal to divide Bengal was made ostensibly for administrative convenience and for ensuring advancement in East Bengal and Assam in the fields of education, etc. This move was strongly opposed by the people of the district in meetings held on the 21st July, 1905. Lal Mohan Ghosh suggested that all honorary magistrates and all members of district boards, municipal commissioners and panchāyats should resign in a body and national mourning should be observed for twelve months during

which the people should not participate in any public rejoicing. This meeting was presided over by the Mahārājā of Dinājpur. The partition was, however, proclaimed in September, 1905. The reaction in the district, to the proclamation, was sharp and a number of meetings were held. Mahārājā Girija Nath Roy took the leading part in the agitation against the partition. People were urged to boycott English goods by way of protest against the partition of the country. Public feelings ran so high that no reception could be accorded to the visiting Lieutenant-Governor. A National School was opened at Dinājpur for boycotting the education which was then being imparted under the control of the Government. Societies were formed to direct and control the agitation and branches of the *Bratee Samiti* and of the *Anusilan Samiti* were formed at Dinājpur town by 1908.

By the First World War, revolutionary movement spread in the district of Dinājpur. When the struggle for *swarāj* began in 1919, local Congress leaders of Bālurghāt preached the ideals of the Congress throughout the sub-division. Some Primary Congress Committees were organised even in interior villages. A spirit of resistance was roused amongst the masses, and a non-violent peasant movement was launched against oppression by the *zamindārs* in various forms. A *mahilā samiti*, a National School, an Arbitration Board for settlement of civil disputes, a National Sub-Registrar's Office, etc., were set up at Bālurghāt. Although these attempts at setting up a parallel administration did not naturally succeed, Hindus and Muslims of the district jointly took part in the Khilāfat movement of 1920. In 1924, Purna Chandra Das, a noted revolutionary, was arrested at Dinājpur. The Swarājya Party, in accordance with its avowed object, succeeded in capturing the seats in the Balurghat and Dinajpur Local Boards. In 1928, there was a *hartāl* in Dinājpur in protest against the Simon Commission. In 1929, the Congress candidates were elected from non-Muhammadan constituencies. In 1930, *hartāls* and picketings were resorted to by the people of Dinājpur in protest against Gandhiji's arrest. The Congress volunteers made non-violent attempts, which were of course unsuccessful, to re-occupy the local Congress office which had been besieged by the Police. The Government replied by extending the provisions of the Prevention of Intimidation and Unlawful Instigation Ordinance to Dinājpur. Messrs. Balurghat Publishing and Trading Co. were warned for publishing and printing objectionable matters. The local school was deprived of its grant-in-aid due to the active participation of its teachers and students in the movement. Suresh Ranjan Chatterjee of Bālurghāt was tried under Section 124A of the Indian Penal Code for having delivered a speech at Bālurghāt and was convicted and sentenced to one year's simple imprisonment. The secret reports of the Government

for the first and second halves of September, 1930, make particular reference to the activities of the people of Bālurghāt sub-division in the civil disobedience movement. According to available information, a 'no tax' campaign appears to have been organised, and nobody came forward to bid at the auction sale of attached properties. The secret reports mention that in October, 1930, it was reported that the residents of Patirāj in police station Itāhār, including Sāntāls armed with bows and arrows, had been indulging in lawless demonstrations as a result of which no chowkidari tax could be collected. In the reports for November, 1930, it was recorded that conditions in Dinājpur had improved except for an incident in Bālurghāt sub-division in which obstructions were offered to some constables while escorting prisoners.

Dinājpur continued to figure in the reports of the Government as a troubled district. During the months of June and July, 1932, the Sāntāls at Ākchhā in Gangārāmpur police station of Bālurghāt sub-division stopped paying rents, chowkidari taxes, etc. In the opinion of the authorities, the Sāntāls had been encouraged to defy the authority of the Government by the civil disobedience movement; according to available records, the Sāntāls were led by Kashiswar Chakrabartti, a Swarajist worker of Dinājpur. They came into clash with the Police on a number of occasions; particular mention may be made of the incident on the 1st July, 1932, when they resisted arrest of some of their co-villagers; the Police thereupon opened fire. Most of the leaders of these Sāntāls were arrested and convicted in specific cases.

On the 28th October, 1933, the railway station of Hili was raided by a group of young men dressed in military uniform. The station staff offered strong resistance, and there was an exchange of fire as a result of which the night guard of the railway station sustained serious injury and died in the hospital. The raiders who belonged to the *Anusilan Samiti* hoisted the National Flag on the station building and decamped with a large amount of money. Subsequently, all the young men who raided the railway station were arrested and brought to trial, and most of them were sentenced to undergo imprisonment for various terms including transportation for life.

During the 1942 Quit India movement, the people of Bālurghāt sub-division acted in a noteworthy manner. On the 13th September night, about eight thousand people from the rural areas assembled at Dāngighāt on the western bank of the Ātrāi, and three miles from Bālurghāt town. Under the leadership of the local Congress leader, Saroj Ranjan Chatterjee, they formed a procession in the next morning and proceeded to Bālurghāt and besieged the town. The Sub-Registrar's Office was completely burnt down. The Civil Court building and the Co-operative Bank building were also burnt. Telegraphic wires were cut and telegraphic

apparatus were dismantled. The Post Office, the Out-Agency Office of the B & A Railway, the Jute Inspector's Office, the Agricultural Demonstrator's Office and Godown, the Assistant Jute Inspector's Office, the Union Board Office, etc., were raided, and office papers and furniture damaged. *Gānjā* and liquor shops were also raided. The processionists were in virtual control of the town, but their control was rather short-lived as the movement was crushed the very next day by the District Magistrate who arrived from Dinājpur with a strong force. The armed police contingent under the District Magistrate opened fire in Tapan police station on a mob of 200 villagers proceeding towards Telighātā to prevent the export of paddy from the district. Meetings and processions were prohibited in the whole sub-division, there were large-scale arrests, and a reward of one thousand rupees was declared for the arrest of Saroj Ranjan Chatterjee. His house was sealed, and subsequently his movables were put to auction. The local Congress office at Bālurghāt was sealed. The Police raided many houses, and a punitive fine of seventy-five thousand rupees was imposed on the Hindu residents of a section of Bālurghāt town.

CHAPTER III

PEOPLE

(a) POPULATION

Total population.—Males and females.—Sex ratio.

A population of 1,323,797 persons was enumerated during the Census of 1961. Of these, 694,372 were males and 629,425 females. There were thus 906 females for every 1,000 males. In the rural areas of the district the sex ratio was 914 females per every 1,000 males, and in the urban areas the ratio was as low as 821 females per every 1,000 males. The table below gives the sex ratio, i.e., the number of females per every thousand males for all the police stations of the district. The Sadar or Bālurghāt sub-division contained a population of 403,448 of whom 209,010 were males and 194,438 females, giving a sex ratio of 930 females per every 1,000 males. The Rāiganj sub-division was the most populous ; it contained a population of 541,323 persons of whom 284,025 were males and 257,298 females, giving a sex ratio of 906 females per every 1,000 males. The Islāmpur sub-division contained the smallest population. Of its 379,026 persons, 201,337 were males and 177,689 females. There were 882 females per every 1,000 males in this sub-division.

Name of police station	No. of females per thousand males
Hili	912
Bālurghāt	917
Kumārganj	938
Tapan	956
Gangārāmpur	924
Bangshihāri	944
Kushmandi	926
Kāliāganj	866
Hemtābād	893
Rāiganj	891
Itāhār	931
Goālpokhar	905
Islāmpur	846
Choprā	857
Karandighi	907

Rāiganj is the most populous police station, containing 11.34 per cent of the population of the district. Goālpokhar comes next, with 11.11 per cent of the population of the district. The police stations of Hili, Bālurghāt, Kumārganj, Gangārāmpur and Tapan contain respectively 2.81, 9.13, 5.21, 6.53 and 6.79 per cent of the population of the district. Kāliāganj, Hemtābād, Itāhār, Kushmandi and Bangshihāri account for 7.09, 3.53, 7.91, 5.55 and 5.47 per cent respectively of the population of the district. The police stations of Choprā, Islāmpur and Karandighi contain 5.20, 6.64 and 5.68 per cent respectively of the population of the district.

Growth of population.—Increase in density.—Improvement of sex ratio.

The population of the district as it is today has been calculated for 1951. According to these calculations, the district contained a population of 976,882 persons in 1951, of whom 518,484 were males and 458,398 females. The district has thus shown an increase of 35.51 per cent over the population of 1951 during the decade 1951-61. The density of population increased from 476 persons per square mile to 645 persons per square mile. The sex ratio was 884 females per every 1,000 males in 1951. There has thus been an improvement in the sex ratio during the past decade.

Immigration.

During the decade 1951-61, a total number of 159,907 immigrants entered the district and were enumerated during the 1961 Census. Of these, 97,839 came from Pakistan (presumably East Pakistan), 33,992 from Bihar and 22,125 came from other districts of West Bengal. There were 1,087 immigrants whose birth-place could not be exactly ascertained. There had been immigrants from all the States of India with the exception of Kerala. Of the 22,125 immigrants from other parts of West Bengal as many as 14,974 came from the neighbouring district of Māldā. The number of immigrants who are said to have come to the district during the decade 1951-61 is somewhat inflated on account of the procedure adopted at the time of the Census for ascertaining the duration of stay of immigrants. It appears that every person was considered to be an immigrant who was not born in the village or town in which he was enumerated. But so far as duration of stay was concerned, it was calculated with reference to the place of enumeration, i.e., an immigrant was not asked to state the number of years he had been staying in the district but the number of years he had been staying at the village or town of enumeration. As immigrants are likely to change their places of residence in search of livelihood more often than persons born in the district, the figure of immigrants who came during 1951-61 naturally underwent some inflation.

Population in urban areas.

In 1951 there were only three towns in the district, viz., the towns of Hili, Bālurghāt and Rāiganj. The combined population of these three towns was 41,940 persons. This urban population formed only 4.3 per cent of the total population of the district. In 1961 the number of towns increased to six, the new towns being those of Islāmpur, Gangārāmpur and

Kāliāganj. Of these six towns of Hili, Bālurghāt, Islāmpur, Rāiganj, Gangārāmpur and Kāliāganj, only Bālurghāt and Rāiganj are municipalities. Islāmpur, Gangārāmpur, Kāliāganj and Hili have been declared towns for the purpose of Census as a majority of the adult male population of each of them is engaged in pursuits other than agriculture. The density of population at each of these towns is more than 1,000 persons per square mile and the total population more than 5,000. These six towns among them accounted for a population of 98,969 persons in 1961 which formed 7.5 per cent of the population of the district. The decade, therefore, marked an increase in urbanisation, though not to the extent desirable. The urban population increased by 136 per cent against the increase of 31 per cent in the rural sector.

Increase in urbanisation.—Rate of increase of population in rural and urban areas compared.

Hili.—Its decline as a town.

The town of Hili showed a decrease in population to the extent of 27.7 per cent and it is doubtful whether ten years hence it would be able to retain the characteristics of a town. But this state of affairs is only to be expected as this town received a death blow at the time of Partition when the pre-partition town of Hili was divided into two. It is situated on the border with East Pakistan, and being deprived of the greater part of the natural region which it used to serve, it has not been able even to maintain the population which it had in 1951.

Balurghat.

The town of Bālurghāt, being the headquarters of the district as also of the Sadar sub-division, attracted settlers from outside and showed an increase of 49 per cent of the population in the past decade. If it continues to remain as the headquarters of the district, then its prosperity may be maintained.

Raiganj.—Growth as a town assured.

The town of Rāiganj which is the headquarters station of the Rāiganj sub-division, more than doubled its population in the decade 1951-61, the percentage increase being 108.7. The town of Rāiganj is advantageously situated on the main road to North Bengal and Assam. It is also connected by rail with the rest of West Bengal and India. It has thus got favourable conditions for the growth of trade and commerce. It may be safely said that the growth of Rāiganj will continue in future.

Kaliaganj, Islampur and Gangarampur.

The towns of Kāliāganj and Islāmpur are also situated on the main road to North Bengal and Assam and connected by rail with the rest of West Bengal and India. They contained populations of 14,478 persons and 9,499 persons respectively in 1961. The town of Gangārāmpur contained a population of 9,671 persons.

Displaced persons.

During the 1951 Census 115,510 displaced persons were enumerated in the old district of West Dinājpur. According to the Collector of West Dinājpur the number of such displaced persons was 112,906. The Census of 1961 disclosed a total number of 97,839 persons who had come to the district from Pakistan (presumably East Pakistan). If all these persons are treated as displaced persons, then the total number of displaced persons in the district amounted to 213,349 in 1961.

(b) LANGUAGE

Important languages.—Bengali, Urdu, Santali, Hindi, Kurukh/Oraon and Mundari.—Distribution of population according to mother-tongue.

Of the various languages spoken in the district, Bengali, Hindi, Urdu, Sāntāli, Kurukh/Orāon and the Mundāri languages together account for 99.32 per cent of the population. The number of persons whose mother tongue is Bengali form 72.19 per cent of the population. Urdu is the next important language. As many as 10.14 per cent of the population of the district have Urdu as their mother tongue. Sāntāli, which is a dialect of the Kherwāri language, occupies the next place, the number of Sāntāli speakers being 9.29 per cent of the population. Hindi comes next, accounting for 5.38 per cent of the population. The Kurukh/Orāon and the Mundāri languages respectively account for 1.44 per cent and 0.88 per cent of the population. Mundāri is also a dialect of the Kherwāri language.

Bengali.

Bengali is spoken throughout the district. The maximum number of Bengali speakers, numbering 128,245 reside in Rāiganj police station. Itāhār police station occupies the next place having 91,229 Bengali speakers. Next come Bālurghāt and Kāliāganj police stations with 88,320 and 82,497 Bengali speakers respectively. Even in the police station of Goālpokhar, which contains the largest number of persons having Urdu as their mother tongue, there are 35,559 persons having Bengali as the mother tongue.

Urdu.

Urdu is mainly spoken in the police stations of Goālpokhar, Islāmpur and Choprā. The numbers of persons having Urdu as their mother tongue in the police stations of Goālpokhar, Islāmpur and Choprā are respectively 91,426, 31,059 and 9,385. Only 1,524 persons speak Urdu in the police station of Karandighi while in the other police stations their numbers can be counted in units, or tens or hundreds.

Santali.

Sāntāli is spoken in all the police stations of the district, the maximum number of Sāntāli speakers being found in the police station of Bālurghāt where their number is 16,764. There are only 648 Sāntāli speakers in the police station of Islāmpur. Sāntāli speakers are concentrated mainly in the police stations of Bālurghāt, Bangshihāri, Kumārganj, Tapan, Gangārāmpur, Itāhār, Rāiganj and Karandighi.

Kurukh/Oraon.

Persons having Kurukh/Orāon as their mother tongue are not found in the police stations of Bangshihāri and Islāmpur. Most of them reside in the police stations of Tapan, Bālurghāt, Gangārāmpur and Hili.

Bilingualism among persons having different mother-tongues.—Bengali.

Of the persons having Bengali as their mother tongue, 28,841 males and 4,376 females are bilingual. English is the subsidiary language for 18,466 of such males and 1,641 of such females. Hindi is spoken as a second language by 6,554 males and 1,368 females, Urdu by 2,628 males and 876 females, Arabic by 800 males and 351 females and Sāntāli by 277 males and 122 females. There are a few bilingual Bengali speakers who speak languages other than English, Hindi,

Urdu, Arabic or Sāntāli as subsidiary languages, but their number is not significant.

Hindi.

10,846 males and 5,844 females, whose mother tongue is Hindi, are bilingual. The number of males having Hindi as the mother tongue, who have Bengali as the subsidiary language is 10,196, the number of such females being 5,770. Among the Hindi speakers only 451 males and 11 females also know English, and 167 males and 41 females also know Urdu. There are a few others among the Hindi speakers who know a second language other than Bengali, English or Urdu, but their number is insignificant.

Urdu.

9,712 males and 4,655 females among the Urdu speakers are bilingual. 6,212 males and 3,229 females have Hindi as their subsidiary language, 2,989 males and 1,350 females have Bengali as their subsidiary language, 313 males and 72 females have Arabic as the subsidiary language, and 191 males and 2 females have English as the subsidiary language. There are a few Urdu speakers who have subsidiary languages other than Hindi, Bengali, Arabic or English but their number is not significant.

Santali.

Quite a large number of Sāntāli speakers are bilingual, the principal subsidiary language being Bengali. As many as 22,194 males and 20,558 females have Bengali as the subsidiary language. Only 638 males and 422 females among the Sāntāli speakers also know Hindi, while only 28 males and 8 females also know English. 20 males and 10 females have subsidiary languages other than Bengali, Hindi or English.

Mundari.

Of the persons who have Mundāri as the mother tongue, 1,565 males and 1,378 females only are bilingual. Of these, 1,558 males and 1,377 females have Bengali as the subsidiary language.

Kurukh / Oraon.

Only 5,103 males and 4,416 females among the Kurukh/ Orāon speakers are bilingual. Of them 4,991 males and 4,377 females have Bengali as the subsidiary language, while only 49 males and 23 females have Hindi as the subsidiary language.

The local Bengali dialect.—Grierson's views.

According to Grierson, the form of Bengali spoken in the district of Dinājpur may be taken as the specimen of the northern dialect of Bengali. According to him this northern dialect of the Bengali language is the result of the influence of the language of the Koches on the Bengali language. He gives the characteristics of the dialect as follows:

> "The system of **spelling** and **pronunciation** closely follows that of Central Bengal, the more contracted forms of the verbal conjugation being as a rule followed. Here and there we meet the letter *l* used instead of *r*, as in the word *śarīlē* for *śarīrē*, in a body.
>
> As regards vocabulary note the use of the word *tābat*, the Sanskrit *tāvat*, to mean 'everything.'
>
> In the declension of **nouns**, there is a Locative Singular in *ēt* or *at*. Examples are; *kashṭēt*, in trouble; *pāyēt*,

on foot; *khētēt*, in the field; *dēśat*, in the country; *hātat*, on the hand; *kāchhat*, near. The Nominative Plural sometimes takes the same form as that of the Instrumental Singular. Thus, *chhāōyātē*, pronounced *chhāwātē*, children. Besides the usual Genitive Plural ending in *dēr*, for *digēr*, as in *bēśādēr*, of harlots, there is a similarly contracted Accusative Dative Plural, as in *chākardēk*, to the servants; *bandhudēk*, friends. In the Pronouns also, it will be seen that there is a tendency to drop the final *ē* of the Accusative-Dative termination *kē*.

In regard to the **pronouns**, the pronoun of the first person is *hāmi*, I. Its Accusative-Dative Singular is *hāmākē*, or *hāmāk*, its Genitive Singular is *hāmār*, and its Nominative Plural is *hāmrā*. Similarly, for the second person, *tumi* is 'thou', the Genitive Singular of which is *tumār*, and so on for the other cases. For the pronoun of the third person, we have *sē*, he; *tāk* or *tāhāk*, him, or to him; *tārā*, they; and *tāydēr*, their. The remaining pronouns exhibit no irregularities. *Jēkhan* and *tēkhan* mean 'when' and 'then'.

In the conjugation of **verbs**, there are irregularities in the personal terminations. The second person, honorific, sometimes ends in *en*. Thus, *den*, you give; *karilen*, you made; *āchhen*, you are. The first person of the future ends in *im*, as in *balim*, I will say. The third singular Past ends in *ē* in the case of Transitive, and drops its termination in the case of Intransitive verbs. The following examples may be noted,—*dilē*, he gave; *pālē*, he obtained; *khālē*, he ate; *puchhlē*, he asked. For Intransitive verbs we have *haïl*, he became. So, *chhil*, he was; *gēl*, he went; *lāgi*, he began; *khēlchhil*, he was, or they were, playing. In one instance, we also find a Transitive verb dropping its final termination, *viz.*, in *kahil*, he said.

As samples of the Perfect tense, we may quote,—*dichhi*, I have given; *karichhi* or contracted *karchhi*, I have done: *bachichhē*, he has escaped; *gēichhē*, he has gone; *āsichhē*, he has come; and *ānchhē*, he has brought. Honorific forms are *karichhen*, he has made; and *Pāichhen*, he has obtained. As a Pluperfect, the word *gēichhil*, he had gone, is an example.

For the Future, we have *pām*, I shall get; *jām*, I shall go; *balim*, I shall say.

The Infinitive ends in *bā*. Thus, *bharibā*, to fill; *dēkhbā pālē*, he was able to see; *karbā lāgil*, he began to do; *parbā lāgil*, he began to fall. Sometimes it is inflected in the Genitive case. Thus, *dibār lāgil*, he began to give; *nibār chāhil*, he wished to take; *ḍākibār khailām*, I told to call.

The Conjunctive Participle ends in *e* after a consonant.

Thus, *āse*, having come ; *kare*, having done ; and many others. After a long *ā*, the termination is *y*. Thus, *pāy*, having got ; *khāy*, having eaten."*

Specimen recorded by Grierson.

The specimen of the dialect as given by Grierson is reproduced below, both in Bengali and Roman alphabet:

এক জন মানুষের দুই ছাওয়া ছিল। তায়্দের মধ্যে ছোট ছাওয়া আপন বাপ্কে কহিল্, বাপ্! সম্পতের যে ভাগ হামি পাম্, তা হামাক্ দেন। তাহাৎ সে তায়্দের মধ্যে বিষয় ভাগ করে দিলেন। কিছুদিন পর ছোট ছাওয়া তাবৎ এক ঠাঁই করে দূর দেশৎ চলে গেল্, আর সেই ঠাঁই সে অপারিমিৎ বেভারে আপনার সম্পৎ উড়ায়ে দিলে। সে তাবৎ খরচ করে ফেল্লে সেই দেশৎ ভারী আকাল হইল্, আর সে কষ্টেৎ পড়্বা লাগিল্। তেখন সে গিয়া সেই দেশের এক জন গিরস্তের আশ্রো নিলে; সে লোক তাহাক্ আপনার মাঠৎ শুওর চড়াবা পাঠায় দিলে। পাছৎ শুওর যে খোসা খায়, সেই দে সে পেট ভরিবা মন্ করিল্, কিন্তুক কেহ তাক্ দিলে না! পাছৎ চেতন পায় সে কহিল্, হামার বাপের কেত দরমাহাদার চাকর বেশী বেশী খাবার পায়, আর হামি হেথা ভুকে মরি! হামি উঠে আপন বাপের কাছৎ যাম্, তাহাক্ বলিম্, বাপ্! হামি স্বর্গের বিরোধে আর তুমার সাক্ষাৎ পাপ্ করিছি, হামি আর তুমার ছাওয়া বলে বলাবার যোগ্ নাহি, হামাক্ তুমার এক জন দরমাহাদার চাকরের মত রাখেন। পাছৎ সে উঠে আপন বাপের নিকট গেল্। কিন্তুক্ সে দূরে থাকতে তার বাপ্ তাক্ দেখ্বা পালে, আর দয়া করে দৌড়ে যায়, গলা ধরে চুমা খালে। ছাওয়া তাক্ কহিল্, বাপ্! হামি স্বর্গের বিরোধে ও তুমার সাক্ষাৎ পাপ করিছি; হামি তুমার ছাওয়া বলে বলাবার যোগ্ নাহি। কিন্তুক্ বাপ্ আপন চাকরদেক্ কহিল্, জল্দি খুব্ ভাল কাপড় আনে ইহাক্ পিন্ধাও; ইহার হাতৎ আংগটী ও পায়েৎ জুতা পিন্ধাও; আর হাম্রা খাওয়া দাওয়া করে আনন্দ করি; কারণ হামার এই ছাওয়া মরে গেইছিল্, বাঁচিছে; হারায় গেইছিল্, পাওয়া গেইছে। পরে তারা আনন্দ্ কর্বা লাগিল্॥

Ek	jan	mānushēr	dui	chhāoyā (chhāwā)
One	person	man's	two	sons

chhila.	Tāydēr	madhyē	chhōta	chhāoyā
were.	Of-them	among	the-young	son

āpan	bāp-kē	kahil.	'Bāp !	sampatēr
his-own	father-to	said,	'Father !	of-the-property

jē	bhāg	hāmi	pām,	tā	hāmāk
what	share	I	will-get,	that	me-to

dĕn.'	Tāhāt	sē	tāydēr	madhyē
give.'	Thereon	he	of-them	among

* Several diacritical marks cannot be reproduced for non-availability of the types.

bishay	bhāg	karĕ	dilĕn.	Kichhu
property	division	having-made	gave.	Some

din	par	chhōṭa	chhāoyā	tābat
days	after	the-young	son	everything

ĕk	ṭhāi	karĕ	dūr	dēśat
one	place	having-made	a-far	land-in

chale	gēl,	ār	sēi	thāi	sē
having-gone	went,	and	in-that-place		he

aparimit	bĕbhārē	āpanār	sampat
riotous	in-behaviour	his-own	property

uṛāy	dilē.	Sē	tābat	kharach
having-caused-to-fly	gave.	He	everything	spent

karĕ	phĕllĕ	sēi	dēśat
having-made	having-wasted	that	land-in

bhārī	ākāl	hail,	ār	sē
a-severe	famine	became,	and	he

kashṭēt	paṛbā	lāgil.	Tēkhan	sē
in-trouble	to-fall	began.	Then	he

giyā	sēi	dēśēr	ĕk	jan
having-gone	that	of-country	a	person

girastēr	āśrā	nilē.	Sē	lōk	tāhāk
householder-of	refuge	took.	That	person	him

āpanār	māṭhat	śūor	charābā	pāṭhāy
his-own	in-field	pigs	to-feed	having-sent

dilē.	Pāchhat	śūōr	jē	khōsā
gave.	Afterwards	the-pigs	what	husks

khāy	sēi	dē	sē	pēṭ
used-to-eat	those	by-means-of	he	the-belly

bharibā	man	karil,	kintuk	kēha	tāk
to-fill	mind	made,	but	any-one	him-to

dilē	nā.	Pāchhat	chētan	pāy
gave	not.	Afterwards	senses	having-obtained

sē	kahil,	'hāmār	bāpēr	kēta
he	said,	'my	father's	how-many

darmāhādār	chākar	bēśi	bēśi	khābār
wage-getting	servants	much	much	to-eat

pāy,	ār	hāmi	hēṭhā	bhukē	mari.
get,	and	I	here	in-hunger	die.

Hāmi	uṭhĕ	āpan	bāpēr
I	having-risen,	my-own	father's

kāchhat	jām,	tāhāk	balim,
in-neighbourhood	will-go,	him-to	I-will-say,

"Bāp,	hāmi	s^{v}argēr	birōdhē	ār
"Father,	I	of-heaven	in-opposition	and

tumār	sākkh^{y}āt	pāp	karichhi;	hāmi
thy	before	sin	have-done;	I

ār	tumār	chhāoyā	balĕ-balābār
more	thy	son	of-being-called

jōg,	nāhi;	hāmāk	tumār	ĕk
worthy	am-not;	me	thy	one

jan	darmāhādār	chākarēr	māta	rākhĕn." '
man	wage-getting	of-servant	like	keep." '

Pāchhat	sē	uṭhē	āpan	bāpēr
Afterwards	he	having-risen	his-own	father's

nikaṭ	gēl.	Kintuk	sē
in-neighbourhood	went.	But	he

dūrē	thāktē	tār	bāp	tāk
in-distance	remaining	his	father	him

dēkhbā	pālē,	ār	dayā	karĕ
to-see	got,	and	pity	having-made

dauṛĕ	jāy,	galā	dharĕ
having-run	having-gone,	neck	having-seized

chuma	khālĕ.	Chhāoyā	tāk	kahil,
a-kiss	ate.	The-son	him-to	said,

'Bāp, hāmi s^{v}argēr birōdhē ō
'Father, I of-heaven in-opposition and

tumār sākkh^{y}āt pāp karichhi; hāmi
thy before sin have-done; I

tumār chhāoyā balĕ-balābār jōg
thy son of-being-called worthy

nāhi.' Kintuk bāp āpan chākardēk
am-not.' But the-father his-own servants-to

kahil, 'jaldi khub bhāla kāpaṛ
said, 'quickly very good clothes

ānĕ ihāk pindhāō; ihār
having-brought this-(person) dress; his

hātatē āṅgṭī ō pāyēt jatā
on-hand a-ring and on-feet shoes

pindhāō; ār hāmrā khāōyā-dāōya (khāwā-dāwā)
put-on; and (let)-us feasting

karĕ ānand kari. Kāraṇ hāmār
having-made joy make. For my

ēi chhāoyā marĕ gēichhil,
this son having-died had-gone,

bachichhē; hārāy gēichhil,
has-survived; having-been-lost had-gone,

pāōyā-(pāwā)-gēichhē.' Parē tārā ānand
has-been-found.' Afterwards they joy

karbā lāgil.
to-make began.*

Dr. S. K. Chatterji's views.

The characteristics of the Dinājpur dialect as noticed by Grierson probably survive to this day. Dr. Suniti Kumar Chatterji, in his *Origin and Development of the Bengali Language*, has expressed the opinion that the use of the word *ham* for *āmi* is a sign of the influence of the Maithili dialect on the Bengali spoken in Dinājpur.

* The above English rendering of the Bengali words, given in Grierson's book in Italics, is reproduced here in Roman letters. Several diacritical marks cannot be reproduced for non-availability of the types.

(c) RELIGION, CASTE AND SOCIAL LIFE

Principal religious communities.—Hindus and Muslims.

Hinduism, Islam and Christianity together account for the religions of 99.9 per cent of the population. The Hindus form 59.9 per cent of the population, the Muslims 39.4 per cent and the Christians 0.6 per cent. It is obvious that at the time of the Census of 1961, most of the Sāntāls, the Mundās and the Orāons, who formed respectively 9.2 per cent, 1.1 per cent and 1.7 per cent of the population, returned themselves as Hindus. The Hindus are in the majority in all the police stations except the police stations of Choprā, Islāmpur and Goālpokhar.

Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

Caste generally was not recorded in the Census of 1961, the caste to which a member of the Scheduled Castes belonged having only been recorded. The name of the tribe to which a member of the Scheduled Tribes belonged was similarly recorded. Persons belonging to the Scheduled Castes formed 20.6 per cent of the population, while persons belonging to the Scheduled Tribes formed 12.9 per cent of the population. Thus, 33.5 per cent of the population, i.e., a little over one-third belonged to the Scheduled Castes and Tribes. A list of the Scheduled Castes and Tribes found in the district of West Dinājpur during the Census of 1961 is given at the end of this chapter.

The Rajbanshis.—Their number and distribution.

The most important of the Scheduled Castes found in the district is the Rājbanshi caste. The Rājbanshis formed 7 per cent of the population of the district. They are found in eleven police stations of the district. During the 1961 Census, 19,155 Rājbanshis were found in Kushmandi police station, 12,795 in Kāliāganj police station, 12,565 in Bālurghāt police station, 11,605 in Tapan police station, 10,983 in Gangārāmpur police station, 9,545 in Rāiganj police station, and 7,792 in Kumārganj police station. Numerically, the next important Scheduled Caste is the Paliyā caste, members of which constitute 5 1 per cent of the population of the district. 20,336 Paliyās were enumerated in Rāiganj police station, 17,262 in Itāhār police station, 8,430 in Hemtābād police station, 7,125 in Bangshihāri police station, 5,940 in Tapan police station, and 4,855 in Gangārāmpur police station. They were not at all found in five police stations. Only 916 Koches were found in the district in 1961. Risley was of the opinion that ethnically the Rājbanshis, the Paliyās and the Koches were the same. There is a legend which was recounted by Dr. Buchanan (Hamilton), that the Rājbanshis are the descendants of those Kshatriyas who fled away from the wrath of Parasurām. The Koches were originally not Hindus and this legend was probably invented in order to find a place for them in the Hindu society. According to Risely, the Paliyā caste is a sub-caste of the Rājbanshi caste. He also noticed that the Paliyās were further subdivided into two subordinate groups known as Sādhu Paliyās and Bābu

The Paliyas.—Their number and distribution.

The Koches.—Their number.

Paliyās. The distinction between Sādhu and Bābu Paliyās lies in the matter of food, the Bābu Paliyās taking food not ordinarily taken by the bulk of the Hindus. There is also another sub-caste called Deshi who regard themselves as somewhat superior to the Paliyās. The usual surnames of the Rājbanshis and the Paliyās are Barman and Singh.

The Deshis.

The Koches and the Rajbanshis in the Censuses of 1901 and 1911.

In the 1901 Census, the Koches and the Rājbanshis were recorded together but in the Census of 1911 they were recorded separately. Mr. L. S. S. O'Malley, the then Superintendent of Census Operations, was of the view that irrespective of any question of origin, the Rājbanshis and the Koches were separate castes, and the Rājbanshis and the Koches were accordingly shown separately in the Census Report of 1911, but the Paliyās were included among the Rājbanshis. In the Census of 1921 also no record of the Paliyās was kept. The typical Rājbanshi has a short broad figure, broad across the shoulder and across the calves of the legs. His nose is broad across the nostrils, the eyes are long and narrow and the cheek bones high. The general appearance shows unmistakable signs of Mongolian strain. The Koches, the Rājbanshis and the Paliyās have the same general appearance. The women freely go about the countryside and attend the *hāts*. They generally wear a single *patani* cloth in check or striped pattern, which is folded across the body and extends from just above the breasts to the knees. The more sophisticated among women wear *shaḍis* while among men, the wearing of *dhoti*, shirt, coat or *chādar* is becoming common. The Koches worship Shiva while the Rājbanshis are mainly Vaishnavas.

The Paliyas in the Censuses of 1911 and 1921.

The Koches, the Rajbanshis and the Paliyas.—Their social life.

Risley noted that a Deshi could take rice, water, sweetmeats, etc., from a Paliyā man but not from a Paliyā woman. There is no inter-marriage between the Paliyās and the Deshis. The Rājbanshis have returned themselves as Hindus and they wear the sacred thread, but till 1931 certain customs were prevalent among them which were not in consonance with the tenets of Hinduism. Mr. A. E. Porter, the Superintendent of Census Operations for the 1931 Census, recorded that divorce was practised among them as well as the system of companionate marriage known as *ga goch* in Rangpur or *pani sarpan* in the terai of Dārjeeling. Under this system, a young man was received into a family and lived with a girl of the household with a view to later on being accepted as the husband of the girl and in the meantime worked for the prospective father-in-law. The re-marriage of widows was customary and attachments not amounting to formal marriage were entered into by widows and divorced women. Mr. Porter spoke of two kinds of these types of attachments ; one was the *ghar dhoka* type and the other *dangua* or *pashua* type. Under the *ghar dhoka* system, the woman betook herself to the man to whom she had taken a fancy and was accepted by him. In the *dangua* or *pashua* system, a widow, parti-

cularly if she had property, secured to herself a protector. He remarked that this latter form of relationship was often adopted with a view to preventing the interference by the relatives of the deceased husband with the administration of his property. In the third decade of the present century, the Calcutta High Court ruled that the Rājbanshis, quite independently of any proof of the custom of re-marriage, were governed by the ordinary terms of the Hindu Law, and, consequently, upon re-marriage, a woman lost title in the estate of her husband. It is likely that social customs regarding inheritance of property might have changed somewhat due to the impact of this High Court decision, but even in 1940, Mr. Bell, the then Settlement Officer of Dinājpur, noticed the prevalence of the custom of dividing equally among the sons borne by a woman in two successive marriages the property of the second husband on his death. The Rājbanshis on entering the Hindu fold, initially adopted only one *gotra*, viz., the Kāshyapa *gotra*. As according to the Hindu custom marriage within the same *gotra* is prohibited, the Rājbanshis were forced to divide themselves into different *gotras* like Kāshyapa, Sāndilya, Bharadvāja, Gautama, Kapila, Vatsya, Visvāmitra, etc. Child marriage is becoming scarce in the district and it is also not met with very much even among the Rājbanshis.

The Santals.

The Sāntāls hail from that part of Bihar and West Bengal, which is drained by the Dāmodar and Kāsāi rivers. The Dāmodar is the sacred river of the Sāntāls. About the circumstances under which the immigration of the Sāntāls into the district began, Mr. Gait, who was the Census Superintendent of 1901, said as follows:

> "About fifty years ago it occurred to the manager of a Government estate that the waste land might be reclaimed if Santáls were imported and settled there. The experiment was made and proved such a success that the influx has continued ever since . . .* Their lead has been followed by a few Mundas and Oráons from Ranchi."

Their social life.

The following account of the system of tribal government among the Sāntāls is quoted from the Census Report of Mr. O'Malley (Census of 1911):

> "The system of tribal government among the Santals is closely bound up with the communal system. Its unit is the village, at the head of which is the Santal headman or Manjhi. He is essential to Santal life, every public sacrifice, ceremony and festival requiring his presence. Should a Santal village have a headman of another race, they will appoint a Santal to perform all the social and ceremonial deaths (duties?) of the Manjhi. He is called

* A sentence from the excerpt has been omitted.

a Handi Manjhi, *i.e.*, a liquor headman, the consumption of liquor being a feature of their ceremonies. In his administrative capacity as fiscal head of the village the Manjhi is assisted by a sub-head man called a Paranik. In his social functions he is assisted by the Jog-Manjhi, who acts as *custos morum* to the young people of the village. If a girl becomes pregnant, the Jog-Manjhi has to find the man who is responsible and bring him before the Panchayat, which will deal with the culprit. If he does not, the village people take him to the Manjhi's cow-shed and tie him with a buffalo's rope to a pole, besides imposing a fine on him. During the Sohrai festival, when much license prevails, the village boys and girls live for five days and nights with the Jog-Manjhi, who has to see that no scandal occurs, *e.g.*, that relatives between whom marriage is prohibited do not have illicit intercourse. The Jog-Manjhi has an assistant called Jog-Paranik, who officiates when he is absent. The fifth and last of the secular village officials is the Gorait, who acts as the Manjhi's orderly, and calls the villagers together at his command. These posts are practically hereditary, but it is recognized that their holders are merely representatives of the village community and that they derive their power from the people themselves. Once a year—they all resign their posts to the village people, though this is now done only *pro formâ*, for they are regularly re-appointed.

"The Manjhi summons the villagers when any question arises affecting their common interests, or when a villager has complained to him and a communal judgment is required. The meeting is called a Panchayat or in Santali *More-hor* (literally five men), a term which probably originally signified the headman and the four other village officials. The latter are *ex-officio* members, and the Panchayat also includes any adult male belonging to the village. If there is a dispute between Santals belonging to different villages, the people of both villages meet together to decide the case. If they cannot arrive at a conclusion, or if one or both of the parties are dissatisfied with their finding, a reference is made to a full bench consisting of a Parganait (who is the head of a group of villages), the village headmen of the group and other influential men in the neighbourhood. As the Manjhi has an assistant in the village, so the Parganait has an assistant in his circle called the Desh-Manjhi.

"Every village has its council place (the Manjhi *than*) where Panchayats are held and petty disputes are settled. The Panchayat also disposes of more serious questions, such as disputes about marriage and inheritance. Questions of serious importance are referred to a

Panchayat consisting of the neighbouring Manjhis under the control of the Parganait.

"Total excommunication, which means expulsion from the tribe, can only be effected by a general assembly of the Santals. This extreme penalty is inflicted for breaches of either the endogamous or the exogamous law, *i.e.*, for sexual intercourse with a non-Santal or between Santal relatives who come within their table of kindred and affinity. If any one commits such an offence, the headman of his village calls his neighbouring colleagues together and informs them. If the charge is believed to be true, the parties are temporarily outcasted. Nothing more can be done till the annual tribal hunt takes place, when the matter is discussed in a full conclave of the Santals. If the case is not proved, those who started the rumour are very severely punished. If it is proved, the assembly gives an order for outcasting, and proceeds to execute the sentence under the supervision of the local Parganait and some other influential men. The main part of the proceedings consists of defiling the outcaste's house. The fire-places, pots, etc., are all broken, while the young men strip and commit nuisance in and round about the house; one case is known in which it took more than two weeks for the place to dry up properly.

"The tribal hunt is the one occasion in the year when the Santals act as a united tribe, all local units and officials being then subordinated to the tribal session. It is a common hunt to which the people are summoned by an official called Dihri, who acts as priest and hunt-master. The summons is sent by a *sal* branch being circulated. In the evening, when the hunt is over, the people meet in council. Here the Manjhis and Parganaits are, if necessary, brought to justice; and if any one has to be excommunicated, his case is dealt with. Any matter, great or small, may be brought forward by anyone; if the case cannot be finally decided then, it is kept in abeyance till next year's hunt.

"The re-admission of outcastes is as public as their excommunication. It is effected by a ceremony called *jam jati* (*i.e.*, eating one's way back to the tribe). When it is to be performed, the village headman informs the local Parganait, and the latter 12 other Parganaits, so that the news spreads over the whole countryside. The person who is to be re-admitted goes to the end of the village street carrying water in a *lota* with a twisted cloth round his neck to show that he is willing to be led. After he has acknowledged his transgression and begged for pity, the most venerable Parganait present takes the *lota* from his hands and bows to the sun. He then rinses his mouth with a little of the water and

passes it round to all leading men, who do the same. After this they enter the village and go to the courtyard of the outcaste, where he washes their feet. All then sit down to a feast at which the outcaste serves them: he also pays the necessary fees, viz., Rs. 5 to every Parganait and to the village Manjhi, and one rupee to every other Manjhi. After the feast the old Parganait announces his restoration to brotherhood. They then dig a small hole, bury a lump of cow-dung in it and put a stone on top, thereby symbolizing that the man's sin is buried for ever."

Mr. Bell, the Settlement Officer in 1934-40, remarked that the Sāntāls were certainly a class apart in the countryside. Their houses are usually neat-looking though built of mud. Their homestead often include a garden in which a few marigold plants may be seen. They are fond of flowers and music. The womenfolk help the men in agricultural work, and, consequently, enjoy almost equal status with the men in the economic sphere. On festive occasions the womenfolk deck their hair with flowers. They wear *shaḍis* which pass off the waist across the breast and over one shoulder. They wear peculiarly shaped ornaments at their ankles.

The Sāntāl's life centres round three big festivals—the *Pausnā parab*, the *Fāguā parab* and the *Chaitra parab*. The first is a form of harvest festival and the second corresponds to the festival of *holi* among the Hindus. The *Chaitra parab* is an occasion of rejoicing. At each of these festivals, there is a good deal of dancing and drinking of liquor made of rice. Men and women take part in the ceremonial dances.

The Sāntāls keep poultry, especially fowls. They are also rather fond of witnessing cock fights. They are extremely fond of dogs and there is hardly a Sāntāl family which does not have a dog. The Sāntāls can subsist on wild plants which are not known to be edible by others. Mr. O'Malley in his report of the Census of 1911 quoted as follows about the laws of inheritance among the Sāntāls from the Santal Pargana District Gazetteer.

"The family share all they have in common till the death of the father when the property is divided equally among the sons, except that the eldest son gets a bullock and a rupee more than the others. The daughters have no right to any of the property, the idea being that a woman does not inherit, for she is expected to marry and to be supported by her husband and her sons. What she gets is a gift, customary and therefore demandable, but it is not inherited. Lately, however, with the sanction of the courts, only daughters have been given a life tenure of the father's land, and this virtually means inheritance by daughters. If a man dies without sons or daughters, the property passes to the father if he is alive,

and if he is dead, to the brothers of the deceased by the same father (not necessarily by the same mother); if the latter are dead, their sons will succeed. In default of these, the deceased's paternal uncles and their sons succeed. The widow of a childless man is allowed one calf, one *bandi* (10 to 12 maunds) of paddy, one *bati* and one cloth, and returns to her parent's house, unless, as sometimes happens, she is kept by her husband's younger brothers. If one of these keeps her, he is not allowed more than the one share of the deceased man's property, which he would get in any case. If a man leaves only daughters, their paternal grandfather and uncles take charge of them and of the widow, and the property remains in their possession. When the daughters grow up, it is the duty of these relatives to arrange marriages for them, and to give them at marriage the presents which they would have received from their father. When all the daughters have been disposed of, the widow gets the perquisites of a childless widow and goes to her father's house or lives with her daughters. A widow with minor sons keeps all the property in her own possession, the grandfather and uncles seeing that she does not waste it. If the widow remarries before the sons are married, the grandfather and uncles take possession of all the property; the mother of the children has no right to get anything, but sometimes a calf is given to her out of kindness, this gift being called *bhandkar*. There are special rules in cases where there is a son-in-law who has married under the *ghardi jawae* form. If his wife has no brothers, and the son-in-law stays on in the house and works for his father-in-law till he dies, then he inherits all the immovable property and half the movable property, the other half of which goes to the relatives of the deceased. If there is more than one such son-in-law, they divide the property between them.

"If there are many grandsons, or if the sons do not live happily together, *e.g.*, in particular, if the father has married again and had other issue, the father and mother may make a partition. A *panchayat* is called and the father divides all the land and cattle, keeping one share for himself. The son with whom the parents live retains possession of their share during their life-time. Daughters get no share in the property, but if they are unmarried, they get one calf each, that being the dowry given them at marriage. Unmarried sons get a double share of the live-stock, one share representing their marriage expenses. The cattle which the daughters-in-law received from their fathers and brothers and from their father-in-law at the time of marriage are not divided, but the cattle which the sons got at marriage

are divided. If a woman dies while her sons are unmarried, they cannot demand a partition even if their father takes a second wife, but they can do so if they like after marriage. The father then gets one share and the sons one share each. If the second wife has no children when the father dies, the sons of the first wife can take the share, their father got, but if they take it they will have to pay for the funeral of their stepmother."

The Orāons

Their social life.

The Orāons mainly hail from Chhotanāgpur in Bihar. They began coming to the district at about the same time as the Sāntāls. The following account of the social system of the Orāons is reproduced from the Census Report of Mr. L. S. S. O'Malley (Census of 1911):

"The Panchayat system is an old and cherished institution among the Oraons, the Panch or council of elders being held in such honour that the Oraons say, before discussing any important business, 'God above, the Panch below,' *i.e.*, the Panch is the highest authority on earth. There are two types of Panchayat, viz., the village Panchayat and the Panchora Panchayat. Originally, when the community consisted only of Oraons, the village Panchayat, *i.e.*, a meeting of *panches* representing the village, was confined to them, but now that the village is more heterogeneous, it has a different constitution. If a question affecting the whole village is to be debated, all the villagers, whatever their caste or tribe, meet in the Panchayat, while its president may be any respected village elder—even a Christian catechist—though it is generally the Mahto or Pahan. This Panchayat meets when occasion demands, and its president is elected only for the meeting. It decides land disputes, questions of inheritance and partition, cases of adultery and any infringement of Oraon customs. It also brings about the reconciliation of enemies, who have to drink a bowl of rice-beer together. Should one or other refuse, he is made to pay a fine or is given a good beating. If they consent to the reconciliation, a light fine is inflicted in order to provide a feast for the villagers. It also assembles to decide what action shall be taken when the village is visited by sickness, either of man or beast. The first thing done is, of course, to find out the wizard or the witch who is devouring their children or their cattle, and the next is to decide how to treat him or her.

"The Panchora Panchayat is a more formal assembly consisting of the adult male members of a group of five or six villages. It is presided over either by the Kartaha or by the Mukhia. There is a Kartaha for each Panchora, who holds his office by hereditary right.

The Mukhia is the chief man of a village or group of villages, and holds his office only as long as he is capable of performing its duties and is approved of by his fellows. The Panchora Panchayat is concerned chiefly with grave offences against caste rules, and also acts as a court of appeal against the decision of the Village Panchayat. If a man is ready to go to the expense of calling this large body together, he can do so, but the expense of giving food and drink to such a large body is naturally deterrent.

"One important function of the Panchora Panchayat is to reinstate a man in caste. It sits in judgment on his case, decides whether he can be re-admitted, and fixes the amount he must pay, etc. In the actual ceremony of reinstatement the Kartaha plays a leading part. In the first place, the outcaste goes round the villages of the Panchora, carrying a *lota* and announcing the date on which the Panchayat will assemble at his house. He has to fast for a certain period, and the Kartaha with two attendants (*bhitrias*), come to his house. Two other Oraons (called *sipahis*), who are especially selected for the purpose, mount guard over him to see that he does not break his fast or take any food or drink except turmeric water. When the period of fasting is ended, the Panchayat assembles, and the offender, after bathing, comes before it. The Kartaha kills a white cock or white goat, and the culprit is made to drink the blood, thus symbolically purging his sin. He then serves each Oraon with some food, after which the Kartaha calls for his fee (*patri tari*), which varies from Rs. 5 to Rs. 15. Having received it, he begins to eat the food prepared by the outcaste. The moment that the Kartaha raises the food to his lips, all the persons present hurl their rice at his head. The offender, after this, brings a fresh supply of food and eats with his fellow tribesmen. The function of the Kartaha, it will be noticed, is that of a scapegoat or sin-eater. On his return home he uses the fees which he has been paid to give a feast to the caste-men. By so doing he atones for having eaten the food of an outcaste.

"In some parts of Barwe in Ranchi there are Parha Panchayats, which differ in constitution and functions from the Panchora Panchayats. Like the latter, the Parha Panchayat exercises jurisdiction over a group of villages, but it does not consist of all the adult males of each village, but only of the leading men in each village, *e.g.*, the Mahto, Pahan, Bhandari, etc. It further deals with matters affecting whole villages, and not merely individuals. The Panchayat, which meets only once a year, deals with matters of religion, the dates of festivals, etc., and also with disputes about the village

flags. Each Oraon village has a flag with a distinctive emblem, and disputes arise if one village makes any wanton innovation in its flag, *e.g.*, adopts the emblem which is distinctive of another. One of its chief functions is to deal with villages that do not observe the customary rules of sport, especially in the annual hunt. Two villages, for instance, unite for a hunt. During the beat a deer is wounded by villagers of village A, but escapes and is killed by the villagers of village B, who surreptitiously carry off their spoils of the chase and enjoy a solitary feast. A curious penalty is inflicted by the Parha Panchayat. The villagers of village A invade village B and beat to death the first pig which crosses their path, so as to supply themselves with a feast in the place of that of which they have been unfairly deprived.

"The offences with which the Panchayat deals, whether it be the Panchayat of the village or of the Panchora, are for the most part offences against caste rules and public morality. The Panchayat takes no notice of sexual intercourse between Oraons if the parties are not closely related. If a child is born, the parties are made to live together. Should the child die, they may separate, provided that all intercourse between them ceases and that the young man pays for the maintenance of the girl till she is married. Sexual intercourse between parties who are closely related is regarded as a very serious offence, and may involve loss of tribal rights for life or for a long term of years. The offending parties will only be able to recover their status, if at all, by the payment of large fine. Extenuating circumstances are however taken into consideration, and the Panchayat may consider it sufficient to give the parties a beating.

"Sexual intercourse between Oraons and non-Oraons is a serious offence, but its heinousness depends on the social status of the caste concerned. Cases of illicit intercourse between an Oraon and a non-Oraon of low caste, *e.g.*, Dom, Ghasi, Turi, Lohar, etc., or of adultery with a non-Oraon of any caste, whether high or low, are submitted to a mixed Panchayat, *i.e.*, a Panchayat composed of the entire male population of the Panchora or Panchoras concerned, both castes being represented. If the act was unpremeditated or committed in drunkenness, the Panchayat will deal leniently with the offenders. If it was premeditated, the offenders may have to pay a fine of a buffalo or 5 or 6 pigs (of a total value of about Rs. 40) before they can be taken back into caste. The fines are divided between the two castes who have formed the Panchayat. Subsequently, the caste which ranks higher in social estima-

tion holds a second Panchayat and imposes another fine on the member of their caste who has brought discredit upon them.

"The rules about eating and drinking are not strict, and breach of them can be condoned by providing a goat or a pig and some rice-beer for a feast, or by the sacrifice of a white goat or a white cock and by drinking the blood of the animal so sacrificed. The ceremony of expiation may be carried out by the Pahan of the village, and the expiation does not necessarily involve the assembly of a Panchayat. As among other tribes of the Chota Nagpur Plateau, a man who has a festering sore—a "wound with maggots" as it is usually described —is considered to have offended against caste and to be unclean. To regain his position, he must call the Panchayat and feast them on a white goat and rice-beer."

So far as laws governing inheritance and partition are concerned, Mr. O'Malley has given the following account in his Census Report (Census of 1911).

"Before approaching the question of inheritance and partition, mention should be made of certain restrictions which, among Oraons, affect the disposal of property, and, it seems, the very notion of possession.

"(i) As a rule, males alone can possess. Women, being by nature destined to 'go and blow another man's furnace,' neither inherit nor receive shares on partition. They can, however, in certain cases, undertake the personal administration of property, enjoy the exclusive usufruct thereof, and even, under specified circumstances, dispose of it finally. Thus, a widow who has no son may adopt either a son or a 'prospective son-in-law,' *i.e.*, a man who will serve in the house and ultimately marry one of the daughters, and the adoptee will have a right to succeed to the property of the widow's husband at her death.

"(ii) Oraon land-owners do not make wills. They may, during their lifetime, sell and even give away property, at least within reasonable limits ; they may, by adopting a child, cause their fortune to go out of their family ; but they are not at liberty to make any disposition of their property, or any part of it, which will take effect at their death. Custom regulates who shall be their heirs and what portion shall accrue to each heir.

"(iii) Under the joint family system, which prevails among the Oraons, the father is sole owner. His sons, married or unmarried, possess nothing personally. The Oraon principle is that sons, so long as their father is alive, must not separate from him, even as regards habitation. Sons, sons' wives and grandsons live under

his roof; to enable them to do so, cattle, grain, provisions, etc., will, if necessary, be moved to adjoining out-houses. All are under the parental rule and form but one household (*onta erpa*) in every possible sense, all toiling at the same fields, all eating from the old man's one cooking pot, all depositing their earnings in the same family jar. The fact of one of the inmates going away does not cause him to become a separate owner. He preserves his right not only to an eventual share of the ancestral fields, but also (if he sends his earnings home) to a share of the family savings that go on accumulating during his absence. When a partition takes place, no one is entitled to a preferential share by reason of his industry or any extra earnings he may have had or may have saved during the joint family regime.

"(iv) Questions of inheritance, and partitions, unless quite simple and clear, are submitted to, and decided by the village *panchayat*. If this rule were violated, the village assembly would refuse to entertain complaints or appeals from the decisions of the family council (also called *panchayat*).

"The property of an Oraon cultivator generally consists of a few annas of *don* (low) land with some high land attached, one or two houses cattle, ploughs, tools, household movables and the money he has saved from the sale of his crops. In the Barwe, it may be explained, one anna of land is the area which can be sown over with 4 *uriyas* of seed, an *uriya* (or *uddu*) being a roundish basket which contains about 30 *pukka* seers of paddy. A "share" is made up of these different parts, viz., a parcel of *don* land and high land, some money from the family purse, a modicum of cattle and agricultural implements.

"*Inheritance*.—To turn now to the subject of inheritance, we shall assume that the dead man had ceased to work in community of interest with his father or brothers, and was, at the time of his demise, a separate owner. If he had not separated, the solutions of hypothetical cases given below will be subject to certain conditions . . . . All the possible combinations of circumstances may conveniently be reduced to three typical cases. The solution of other cases, viz., from which one feature of a typical case is absent or in which the features of two typical cases are mixed, will generally be obvious.

"*Case No. I.—The deceased leaves a widow with grown-up children (not daughters only)*.—The sons first of all set apart their mother's share, *i.e.*, about half an anna of land with attached high land, a pair of bullocks and plough, some twenty or thirty rupees, and whatever

paddy is required for her subsistence till the new crop is reaped. This jointure she is free to manage as she pleases, *e.g.*, she may have the land cultivated by her sons or by strangers on the *sajha* (half produce) system of rent ; she may enjoy it for life, though she cannot alienate it. As a rule, she simply adds it to the share of the son with whom she goes to end her days, and who will afterwards be her sole heir. If she is prepared to live alone or with one of her daughters, her share will, at her death, revert to the sons and be divided among them.* If, at the time of her marriage, she had received any money as dowry, and if this dowry or its equivalent is still with her (having been converted into non-consumable property or, possibly, kept in a jar), the widow resumes it without prejudice to her share of her husband's property. At her death both dowry and share will go *in integro* to the son with whom she went to live.

"The widow's share having been allotted, the brothers parcel out† the remaining patrimony (land, money, cattle, and household movables) according to a scale dependent on their respective ages, as described below. In applying this scale to the apportionment of land, regard must be had to the fertility of the soil allotted to each as much as to its net area, and therefore the youngest of the brothers is first provided with at least half an anna of good low land. The remainder is next divided in such a way that each of the other brothers gets, as far as is consistent with the total area and the variable quality of the soil, a share double that assigned to the brother next to above him in age. For instance, if three annas of land is to be parcelled out between three brothers, the youngest will receive half an anna of good soil, the middle one will get, say, one or two half annas of good and indifferent land, and the eldest will receive one anna of good and half an anna of indifferent land. This unequal allotment is meant to correspond roughly to the unequal number of years spent in toiling on the paternal fields. Should one of the elder brothers have met, when a child, with some accident permanently incapacitating him from work, he would receive a share no larger than the brother immediately next to him.

"If all the brothers are not born of the same mother, they each get a share** calculated as above, with this

* "The whole of this paragraph applies to a step-mother as well as to a mother."

† "The brothers may, of course, make no separation of interests, if they prefer to keep the property joint. In the latter case, every one's share, would remain under the management of the eldest brother. *Cf.* the section on Partition . . . ."

** "This is not the case if the brothers have, at the time of their father's second marriage, demanded a partition."

difference, that the sons by the second wife get less than the sons by the first wife, *e.g.*, if 5 annas of land are to be divided between four brothers, two by a first and two by a second wife, the combined shares of the first two will perhaps amount to 3½ annas, whereas those of the other two will be the remaining 1½ annas. Illegitimate brothers, and sons of the father's second wife by a first husband, receive no share whatever. Also, if one of the brothers, by misconduct or marriage with a non-Oraon girl, has lost his tribal rights and not recovered them, he has no claim to inheritance. Articles which it would be difficult to divide, or of which the value is not enough to make it worth while to sell them, are often given up by the heirs to their adult sisters. For instance, if 15 maunds of paddy, a cow and two goats have to be divided, the elder sister would receive, say, 8 maunds and the cow, and the younger 7 maunds and the two goats: the cow and the goats are merely gifts, not shares.

"*Case No. II.—The deceased leaves a childless widow, or a widow with grown-up daughters.*—The widow may have been the deceased's first or second wife: in both cases, provided that she does not remarry or return to her parental home, she is entitled to the administration and exclusive usufruct of her husband's property until her death.* Her administration is only subject to a sort of mild supervision on the part of her husband's relatives, and she may not quit the village. Should she marry again, all movable and immovable property may be resumed by the natural heirs from the day that she quits the house: on leaving her husband's relatives, she is merely allowed the clothes she has on.† If she has grown-up unmarried daughters, they may not follow her; otherwise, they forfeit all claims on their grandfather and uncles as regards their marriage.

"Once the widow has quitted the house, the inheritance reverts to the dead man's father; in default of the latter, the dead man's brothers divide it among themselves on the same scale as regulates succession from father to sons. In case of the pre-decease of any of the brothers, his sons receive his part of the heritage and subdivide it (at once or eventually) among themselves. Should the deceased have left neither brothers nor nephews, his paternal uncles succeed.

"None of the daughters can prefer a claim to inheritance, but should they be still unmarried, their mother, in case she enjoys the usufruct, or for their father's relatives, if she does not, are bound to maintain them until

* "We assume that the deceased had no son by his first wife."

† "This is the practice in the Barwe. It is said that elsewhere in Ranchi brothers-in-law show themselves somewhat more generous."

suitable husbands have been found for them. No dowry is demandable.

"There exists only one expedient by which a man who is unfortunate enough to have only daughters and no sons may, during his life-time, arrange to leave them his property.* This consists of the adoption of a prospective son-in-law, called *erpaieon khaddi* (Hindi, *ghardamad*, or *ghardijwa*), who wins his wife by service as Jacob did Leah. There are three kinds of prospective sons-in-law. Those of the first kind (found exclusively in Barwe) are practically servants. They receive pay in kind of 8 maunds of paddy a year, their food and clothing, plus a yearly bonus varying from 2 to 12 maunds of paddy, and when the daughter is finally given to them as a wife, they have to leave the house. Those of the second kind (rare in Lohardaga and Ranchi) may after marriage either stay in the house or set up a separate establishment for themselves. In addition to their pay, board and clothing, the yearly bonus and the wife, they receive, on departure, a pair of bullocks and plough, their tools and various household articles. The third kind of prospective son-in-law, the only one of which we speak in connection with inheritance, is rare; among every hundred families having only daughters perhaps ten such sons-in-law may be found. He gets neither pay nor bonus, but receives the same treatment as a son, and if there are servants in the house, they obey him as their future master. Personal pride will, as a rule, prevent an Oraon youth, unless he is an orphan and destitute, from becoming a *ghardamad* of any kind and 'indebted for his living to his wife'. When, for such reasons as widowhood, divorce, age, etc., it is probable that a man will die without male issue, he may, on the ground that he wants hands for the cultivation of his fields, take in his house one or more young men, and adopt them as prospective sons-in-law, conferring upon them all the rights of inheritance due to a son or sons. The only conditions are that they must marry his daughters and work for him until his death. He may, if he prefers, confer the right of sonship upon any young man who agrees to the latter condition; the son adopted in this way will inherit all the property subject only to the charge of providing for the widow and daughters, if any. Adoption, pure and simple, is the only possible scheme when the adopted boy is a relative or when the old man is childless.

* "A widow who retains the usufruct of her husband's property has power to make arrangements to the same effect *i.e.*, she may adopt a prospective son-in-law or a son who will be entitled at her death to succeed to her husband's property."

"It might conceivably happen that the man may have male issue after adopting an heir. The question of inheritance must then be settled by amicable compromise, the natural heir and the adopted heir dividing the property much as an elder and younger brothers would, *i.e.*, on an inverted scale of ages.

"*Case No. III.—The deceased leaves a widow with small children.*—If the widow does not remarry, she retains (as in Case No. II) the administration and usufruct of her husband's property subject to the charges already described, with the power of adopting sons-in-law or sons. She keeps all her children in her own house. If she has sons, she is bound, when they come of age, to hand over to them their shares of the paternal fields and of any money they have saved, keeping for herself only half an anna of land, etc., as in Case No. I.

"If the widow remarries, there are two possible contingencies. First, if her dead husband's children are all daughters, the property reverts to the dead man's relatives, subject to the ordinary charges. Secondly, if her children by her first husband are only boys or boys and girls, the property is administered, during the minority of the children, by their paternal grandfather or one of their paternal uncles. But, whatever is the sex of the children, and, even if they are all daughters, the trustee is entitled to take them all over to his house if they can render themselves useful there by tending cattle, driving the plough or helping in household work. For those under nine or ten years of age, the trustee makes a fixed allowance to the mother. When they have reached that age, if they do not come over to his house, not only will the allowance be stopped, but the boys will forfeit their patrimony altogether, and no further grants will be made for the maintenance of the girls.

"*Partition.*—In the preceding sections an account has been given of the breaking up of a joint family holding into several distinct holdings immediately after the owner's death. Partition may also take place sometime after the owner's death or during his lifetime. In both cases, the parcelling out of land and money may be particular or general.

For instance:—

"(a) A widower's adult sons are entitled, in the event of their father taking a second wife, to demand a general partition. This step is, as a rule, taken before the birth* of a child by the second marriage: otherwise,

* "Unborn children have no rights: *cf.* the proverbs:—*Sutlo sutal ke hissa?* What can be the share of a man asleep? *Najho byate danda dor*—A waist thread for the unborn! *i.e.*, to reserve a share for a child still in the womb would be as silly as making clothes for an unborn child."

the applicants would have to reserve at least one share for him, if a male (*see* Inheritance, Case No. I). And, as bachelors are never allowed to separate from their father, the demand for partition must be made to the father or the village assembly by the married sons.

"(b) From a similar interested motive, brothers who, for any period subsequent to their father's death, have continued to hold the property jointly, may demand partition, if the eldest (who, in all matters not justifying a family council, is the manager of their joint land and joint purse) turns out to be incapable, careless or of doubtful integrity.'

"(c) Whether the family patriarch is dead or not, the frequent recurrence of broils between the brother's wives is a common cause of partitions.

"(d) Any member of a joint family may, from the date of his marriage, apply for his share to his father or (if the father is dead) to the family council; an appeal to the village *panchayat* is open to him in case of refusal. His request will often be granted, if based on reasonable grounds, as is the case when the applicant is desirous and, on all accounts, able to conduct his own affairs, or when he or his wife has some standing quarrel with the rest of the family, or when he reasonably suspects that his interests will not be safe in the hands of others. Orphan nephews often obtain separation from their uncles on the latter account.

"Partition, whatever its nature and extent, has to be applied for, and, in order to be obtained, must be justifiable on prudential, if not on other, grounds. When insisted upon against reason, or extorted by irregular methods, the applicant's share may be reduced to one-fourth, or even one-half, of the amount otherwise due to him The normal quota of land and money constituting a partition share mainly depends on the place each particular member of a joint family occupies in the genealogical tree. This quota has been sufficiently described above.

"(a) *Inheritance Cases Nos. I and II.*—When, before the death of the owner or of his first and second wife, a partition, general or particular, takes place, the share due to each, or any, separating member of the family is somewhat diminished by the necessity of making provision for the maintenance of the remaining parent or parents. This provision is, under no circumstances, larger than that mentioned in Case No. I of inheritance. If, at the time of general partition, there are female orphans in the family which is to be broken up, they are taken care of *gratis* by the grandfather or one of the uncles.

"(b) *Posthumous shares.*—If at the time of his decease,

a man's share has not yet become his effective property (his father still being the owner), or, if though possessed by him, it has not yet been dissociated from his brother's holdings, a preliminary partition is, of course, indispensable before the said share can be inherited by the deceased's descendants and become liable to the further partition which has been described in the section dealing with Inheritance.

"(c) In what is stated below we are exclusively concerned with the rules that govern preliminary partitions of this kind. All the points not touched upon here must be settled as in the section on Inheritance.

"*Case I.*—If the widow has grown-up children (not daughters only), the sons will judge for themselves whether they want to separate from their uncles. If they do, a preliminary partition must take place. If there are unmarried daughters, they will be cared for by their mother and brothers.

"*Case II.*—If the widow is childless or has daughters only, it being further supposed that she does not remarry, her right to administer, and enjoy the usufruct of, her husband's property does not come into operation at once. She may not demand that her husband's share be separated for her, until such time as a general partition is brought about by other causes. Meanwhile, she and her unmarried daughters are, as a consequence, obliged not to leave the house where the joint family resides.

"*Case III.*—If the widow has small children of the male sex, she may demand a posthumous partition, everything subsequently proceeding as in Case No. III of Inheritance."

Social relationships and social practices in a typical village.

It is unfortunate that recent information about the socio-religious customs prevalent among the Caste Hindus is not available. Professor N. K. Bose, who is a Member of the State Advisory Committee for the revision of District Gazetteers and who was at the time Director of the Anthropological Survey of India, kindly offered to collect information on some points relating to these subjects by having a special survey carried out of one village in the district. At his instance, Shri Tarasish Mukhopadhyay carried out the survey of the village of Bāghān. This village "was selected after careful consideration of several factors, viz., location, population and caste composition, having a pattern in common with other neighbouring villages. It was ensured that the village was not vitally affected by the impact of industrialization or urbanization and had the distinct characteristics of a representative traditional village of that area. Emphasis was also laid on its geographical set-up, so that environmental influences on the socio-economic life of the village as a whole might also be compared. Before selecting

the village, necessary information was gathered from current literature, district handbooks and gazetteers; while different authorities and experts were consulted and their advice obtained in order to make the study as perfect as possible." It may, therefore, be assumed that the broad features of the social relationships found to be existing by him between the members of the different castes and communities might be taken as representative of such conditions prevailing in general in the rural areas of the district of West Dinājpur. It may be stated here that the village of Bāghān is situated at a distance of fourteen miles (twenty-two km) from Rāiganj, the sub-divisional town.

There are persons belonging to the (1) Brāhmana, (2) Baishya Sāhā, (3) Bārui, (4) Barman (?), (5) Debasarmā, (6) Dhibar, (7) Goālā, (8) Hāri, (9) Jāliā-Kaibarta, (10) Kāyastha, (11) Kurmi, (12) Kewot, (13) Musahar, (14) Namasudra, (15) Nuniā, (16) Rājbanshi, (17) Rājvor and (18) Sadgop castes, the (19) Sāntāl tribe and the (20) Muslim community, in the village. These different castes and communities are found to reside in well-defined areas of the village in such a manner that members of the same caste or of castes of equal rank socially live in close proximity to one another. For example, the Muslims live in the Miān-*pāḍā*, and the Sāntāls and Musahars live in the Sāntāl-*pāḍā*. These distinct localities or *pāḍās* within the village are not only distinctive because of the fact that members of the same caste or similar castes or tribe reside in them, grouped together, but also because the persons residing in a *pāḍā* consider themselves as forming a small unit with one or two persons acting as leaders. There are similarly persons who can be considered leaders even taking the village as a whole. The roles played by local leaders are fairly important but with the establishment of statutory Panchāyats under the West Bengal Panchayat Act, the members of such elected Panchāyats are coming to wield more and more authority.

So far as religion is concerned, it is seen that side by side with acknowledged Hindu deities like Kāli, local deities like Garam or Mohārājā are also worshipped by the Hindus. Garam is supposed to reside in the neighbouring jungle and is the protecting deity of the village. The Hindus even offer *sinni* at the place of the local *pir*, that is, Muslim holy man. Previously a non-Brāhmana (a Mālākār by caste) used to act as the priest of the village temple and officiate at the worship of the goddess Kāli. Recently he has been replaced by a Brāhmana priest.

Among the Hindus, the persons who have given out their caste as Debasarmā are the most numerous. According to Shri Mukhopadhyay, these Debasarmās are becoming more and more ritualistic in their religious observances. Formerly no Brāhmana used to reside in the village, but now the Debasarmās are gradually accepting the services of the

immigrant Brāhmana priests. "Caste-relationship has certain broad divisions, namely, direct or fixed and indirect or casual. When one family maintains traditional relation with the family of a fixed ritual servant and payments are made to them in cash, kind or in both we can place it in the first category. At Baghan, this type of relationship has almost lost its use and can be found only in case of the Malakars or garland-makers, who yearly visit their clients' place and collect paddy, vegetables or cash as offered and that is known as sidha. In the next type, i.e., casual or indirect each individual has the freedom of accepting services from a number of individuals according to their own convenience. Here payments are made in cash." Most people are found to follow the latter system. But one thing is required to be pointed out in this connection, which is that religious or social services are not accepted from the same person by all the castes. Thus the priest of a particular low caste may not be accepted as a priest by members of higher castes.

Recreational activities consist of *Harināmsankirtan*, *Bishahara gān* and *Satyapirer gān*. The last-named function is an example of the fusion of Hindu and Muslim religious practices. The name *Satyapir* is derived from the word *Satya* of Satyanārāyan and *pir* meaning a Muslim holy man. Details of the ceremonies observed in connection with the singing of *Harināmsankirtan*, the songs in praise of Manasā, the goddess of snakes, and the songs in praise of *Satyapir* are reproduced below from the unpublished report of Shri Tarasish Mukhopadhyay:

> "There is a batch of musicians at Baghan, who play different musical instruments and sing devotional songs accompanied by a kind of drum i.e. *khole*. They are residents of No. 2. Baghan. Their party or *dal*, include five artists and excepting one all are the residents of Baghan."

They sing songs to the accompaniment of the music of the *khole*, the harmonium, the bamboo flute and the *kartāl* (percussion instrument).

> "For maintaining intra-village relation they participate in all private as well as village functions, whenever called for. In the month of Chaitra (March-April), they sing in front of the village temple located in the jungle i.e. Kali-tala. Again, in the month of Vaisakh (April-May) the party moves around the wards of No. 2 Baghan, when a number of Haris and Debasarmas accompany them. They, however, do not claim any presents from the villagers. But on the last day of Vaisakh, the singers are treated with a feast in a Debasarma family. This is the family of a religious preceptor and the head of the household is known as Goswami. In the month of Phalgun (February-March),

the same Goswami invites them to sing Kirtan continuously for twenty-four hours, and this is termed as astha-prahar . . . .

"*Sattya-Pirer-Gan*

This is a kind of song usually sung by a number of castes like Barman, Debasarma and even Mussalman. The central theme of the song is the praise of the deity Sattyanarayan, who is equally worshipped by the Mussalmans as Sattya-Pir. Generally recital of these songs are arranged for by a devotee in fulfilment of his vow to the deity. This promise is known as manasik. It is interesting to note that at the time of singing, the principal singer wears the dress and costumes of a Mussalman, though in fact he may be a Hindu by religion. The singer wears loose trousers and fine shirt i.e. paijama and panjabi, on his neck there is a bunch of bead necklace i.e. Fakir-katir-mala. He holds a yak-tail-fan i.e. *chamar* in his hand, and has as his head-gear a black cotton cap i.e. *tupi.* The singer never wears shoes at the time of singing ; and that is said to be a mark of respect for the deity. The whole series of songs takes about 21 days to recite. But as it is a costly affair, the singers usually draw an end on the third or on the tenth day according to means of the organizers. The song usually continues from 6 P.M. to 12 P.M. On the first day of the festival, an earthen pitcher i.e. *ghat* is ceremonially placed, and no singing is done. When the course of the song is over, a feast is customarily arranged on behalf of the organizers and people are invited to participate. As a token of prestige, invited guests pay an amount varying from .50 nP. to Re. 1 to the host in honour of the deity. This payment is known as *joutuk*. Rest of the uninvited villagers—whether they belong to Baghan or other villages—are treated with a *pan* each. For that courtesy they do not, however, pay anything . . . . . .

"*Bishahara-Gan* (Song in praise of the deity of Snakes)

The central theme of this song is the legend of Manasa, the popular Snake-goddess. This is also arranged in fulfilment of one's vow to the deity or in appeasement of the goddess to get rid of fear from snakes. Usually it takes 21 days to complete the whole recital. But there are also abbreviated versions which may end on the 3rd or on the 11th day. The goddess is worshipped on the 30th of Sravana, and the song which is popularly called as Mansar vasan, is arranged on the first day of the month of Bhadra. Both of these dates usually fall in the month of August. The song is conducted by a principal singer or *gayen*, and his co-singers hold

the burden. A kind of drum i.e. *khole*, and *kartal* are played in accompaniment. Both the singers and as well as the drummer keep standing while singing. The dress of the principal singer is rather peculiar. He wears loose trousers and fine *panjabi*, holds a wisp i.e. *chamar* in his hand and covers his head with a cap made of pith. The cap is ornamented with the replica of hood of venomous snake i.e. cobra. These songs are equally popular with Hindus and Muslims. It does not matter, whether the singer is a Hindu or a Muslim."

(—*Shri Tarasish Mukhopadhyay's Report*)

A large number of displaced persons from East Pakistan has settled in this district as a consequence of the Partition of Bengal. Their presence has been bringing about changes in the social and economic structure of the population.

Muslims.

The Muslims are conventionally divided into four classes —Shekh, Saiad, Mughul and Pathān—but, according to Mr. Gait, who conducted the Census of Bengal in 1901, such divisions have very little significance. According to him, the Shekhs should be Arabs, and the Saiads descendants of Āli, Muhammad's son-in-law, but in Bengal both groups include a number of persons of purely local origin. He was, however, of the opinion that the Shekhs in many parts of the country, instead of connoting foreigners, did exactly the reverse. According to him, there are two main social divisions among the Muslims: one is Ashraf or Sharif and the second, Ajlaf. The first means "noble" or "persons of high extraction" and include undoubtedly descendants of foreigners and higher castes of Hindu. All other Muslims are considered to belong to the second category, irrespective of the functional groups to which they belong. Ethnically, most of the Muslims of the district are not very different from the indigenous Rājbanshis or Paliyās but there are undoubtedly Muslims who show signs of foreign extraction.

Marriage and inheritance among members of the upper caste Hindus are governed by the provisions of the Hindu Law and those among Muslims by the provisions of the Muhammadan Law. Local variations, if they exist, are not very significant. The Muslims of the district are mostly Sunnis.

(d) SOCIAL LIFE—OTHER ASPECTS

Marital status.

Of the total population of the district 43 per cent were found to be married during the Census of 1961. 50.1 per cent were found unmarried, 6.3 per cent were either widowers or widows, 0.4 per cent were found living separate from their husbands or wives, as the case might be, and in respect of 0.2 per cent information about their marital status was not recorded. There were only 392 males and 929 females who

were married in the age-group 0-9 years. In the age-group 10-14 years, 1,191 males and 11,506 females were married. The total number of married persons in the age-group 0-14 years was 14,018 of which 1,583 were boys and 12,435 girls. They constituted 1.06 per cent of the population and 2.43 per cent of the boys and girls in the age-group 0-14 years. Thus, child marriage has almost disappeared from the district. The married males of all ages form 41.7 per cent of the total male population of the district while the married females form 44.6 per cent of the female population. This is only to be expected as the age at marriage is lower in the case of a woman than for a man. Widowers form 2.7 per cent of the male population while widows form 10.3 per cent of the female population.

Dwellings.

A list of all houses was prepared in October, 1960, in connection with the population Census of 1961. In that list of houses, the materials with which the walls and roofs of the houses were constructed were noted along with the number of rooms in the possession of each household. The Superintendent of Census Operations prepared a table showing the materials with which the walls and roofs of dwelling houses are constructed in the district. For preparing this table, he took a systematic 20 per cent sample of all the households entered in the houselist and then classified the dwelling houses in their occupation by wall and roof materials. For this purpose he treated as dwellings, structures which contained a parlour, a sitting room, a sleeping room, a kitchen, a latrine, a bath or a study, etc., but he excluded structures within the homestead used as cow-sheds, grain-*golas* and *dhenki-ghars*. From the table prepared by him, it appears that the walls of 51.71 per cent of the dwellings are made of grass, leaves, reeds or bamboos, while the walls of 45.84 per cent of the dwellings are constructed of mud. Burnt bricks account for the walls of only 1.81 per cent of the dwelling houses. In the rural areas as a whole, 51.27 per cent of the houses have walls of grass, leaves, reeds or bamboos, and the walls of 47.16 per cent of the houses are built of mud. Only 1.08 per cent of the houses have got walls made of burnt bricks. The situation is somewhat different in urban areas where the walls of 61.65 per cent of the dwelling houses are made of grass, leaves, reeds or bamboos, the walls of 16.08 per cent of the dwelling houses are made of mud, and the walls of 18.31 per cent of the dwelling houses are built of burnt bricks. In the urban areas there is another material of which the walls of an appreciable number of houses are made. This material is corrugated iron sheet. As many as 3.36 per cent of the dwelling houses in urban areas are made of corrugated iron sheets.

So far as the material of roofs is concerned, 87.47 per cent of the houses have got roofs made of grass, leaves, reeds or thatch. The roofs of 10.07 per cent of the houses are built

of corrugated iron or zinc* sheets, and the roofs of only 1.57 per cent of the houses are built of tiles or slates or shingles. In the rural areas, the roofs of 89.64 per cent of the houses are built of grass, leaves, reeds or thatch and the roofs of 8.28 per cent of the houses are built of corrugated iron or zinc sheets. Tiles or slates or shingles form the roofs of only 1.54 per cent of the houses. In the urban areas corrugated iron or zinc* sheets are used as roofing material in respect of 50.47 per cent of the houses. In 38.49 per cent of the houses, the roofs are constructed of grass, leaves, reeds or thatch. The roofs of 5.15 per cent of the houses are built of concrete or stone slabs, of 2.92 per cent of the houses with brick and lime and of 2.18 per cent of the houses with tiles or slates or shingles.

The average number of persons per room for the district as a whole is 3.55. In the rural areas there are 3.53 persons per room on an average, and in the urban areas, there are 3.93 persons per room on an average.

The homestead in a village is surrounded by mango, jackfruit and other trees and bamboo groves, as a result of which it is not sometimes visible from a distance. The tribal people, particularly the Sāntāls, decorate the mud walls of their houses by painting various designs. The house usually consists of a number of huts round a courtyard.

Furniture.

Furniture are conspicuous by their absence in most homes in the rural areas. In some homes, *māchān*s constructed of bamboos are used as beds.

Dress.

The dresses worn by the womenfolk of the Rājbanshi. Koch and Paliyā castes and the Sāntāl tribe have already been described. So far as the womenfolk of other castes are concerned, they generally wear *shaḍi*s. The Hindu menfolk generally wear *dhoti*s and shirts. Muslim menfolk also wear *lungi*s.

Food.

The staple diet of the people consists of rice and rice products like *chiḍā* and *muḍi*. In addition to rice, vegetables and pulses are taken and sometimes meat or fish.

Amusements.

The chief sources of amusements are *jātrās*, touring cinemas and circuses and the numerous fairs (*melas*) which are held throughout the district in different periods of the year. The *melas* and festivals provide occasions for social gatherings. Cattle and articles of daily use including clothings are sold in these fairs. A householder replenishes his stock of these articles at these fairs.

The character of the people.—Strong's views.

Mr. F. W. Strong made the following remarks about the character of the people in his District Gazetteer of Dinajpur which was published in 1912:

"Any one who has had much experience of them will give the people of the Dinājpur district a good character.

* "Corrugated iron or zinc sheets" is the heading used in the Census Table. Actually, the roofs of all these houses are made of corrugated iron sheets.

They are a simple and contented race, neither insolent and ostentatious in prosperity nor yielding readily to despair in adversity. They cannot be described as quarrelsome, serious rioting being almost unknown, and if they indulge unduly in litigation it is largely at the instigation of the touts or lawyers' jackals, to be found in every village, and who go by the name of *diwaniās*. Their relations with each other and with their superiors are generally friendly and amongst the lower orders sullenness and discourtesy to strangers are rarely met with. The same placid and friendly spirit prevails amongst the landholding classes, who seldom think it necessary to quarrel with each other or oppress their tenants. The district is an old-fashioned one."

His remarks would be applicable almost in toto even today. In this connection, it would not be out of place to also reproduce the remarks of Mr. F. O. Bell, who was the Settlement Officer and who entertained a somewhat better opinion of the *diwaniās* than Mr. Strong:

Bell's views.

"As a Magistrate one learns much of faction in the villages. As a Settlement Officer, one learns that there is much discipline and co-operation in the countryside. The building of bridges and wells, by jotedars, and maintenance of schools by the 'musti-bhiksha' system has been mentioned previously and the strict family and tribal discipline of the Santhals is wellknown. But in all matters, there is a strict social conscience, and respect for the opinion of leaders. The 'dewania' system flourishes in Dinajpur, as elsewhere in North Bengal. There is no special qualification for a dewania, except brains and personality above the average. The 'dewania' or tout, as he is sometimes dubbed is the adviser on all legal matters. He is a sort of 'poor man's lawyer', and fills a place in rural society. If he becomes the agent of some unscrupulous town pleader, he can lead families into ruin, but left to himself, is a means of lightening the darkness of rural life."

TABLES

AREA AND POPULATION, URBAN AND RURAL

Area—2,052 square miles (5,314.68 sq km)

POPULATION

(1961 Census Figures)

Police Stations		Persons	Male	Female
Hili	Urban	6,032	3,209	2,823
	Rural	31,213	16,272	14,941
	Total	37,245	19,481	17,764

Police Stations		Persons	Male	Female
Bālurghāt	Urban	26,999	14,619	12,380
	Rural	93,849	48,424	45,425
	Total	120,848	63,043	57,805
Kumārganj	Urban	..	..	..
	Rural	68,998	35,602	33,396
	Total	68,998	35,602	33,396
Gangārāmpur	Urban	9,671	5,179	4,492
	Rural	76,835	39,771	37,064
	Total	86,506	44,950	41,556
Tapan	Urban	..	..	..
	Rural	89,851	45,934	43,917
	Total	89,851	45,934	43,917
Islāmpur	Urban	9,499	5,789	3,710
	Rural	78,443	41,836	36,607
	Total	87,942	47,625	40,317
Karandighi	Urban	..	..	..
	Rural	75,191	39,424	35,767
	Total	75,191	39,424	35,767
Choprā	Urban	..	..	..
	Rural	68,868	37,094	31,774
	Total	68.868	37,094	31,774
Goālpokhar	Urban	..	..	..
	Rural	147,025	77,194	69,831
	Total	147,025	77,194	69,831
Rāiganj	Urban	32,290	17,574	14,716
	Rural	117,782	61,801	55,981
	Total	150,072	79,375	70,697
Kāliāganj	Urban	14,478	7,973	6,505
	Rural	79,433	42,357	37,076
	Total	93,911	50,330	43,581
Hemtābād	Urban	..	..	..
	Rural	46,769	24,706	22,063
	Total	46,769	24,706	22,063
Itāhār	Urban	..	..	..
	Rural	104,709	54,235	50,474
	Total	104,709	54,235	50,474
Kushmandi	Urban	..	..	..
	Rural	73,448	38,134	35,314
	Total	73,448	38,134	35,314
Bangshihāri	Urban	..	..	..
	Rural	72,414	37,245	35,169
	Total	72,414	37,245	35,169
TOTAL:	Urban	98,969	54,343	44,626
	Rural	1,224,828	640,029	584,799
	Total	1,323,797	694,372	629,425

Source: Office of the Superintendent of Census Operations, West Bengal.

POPULATION ACCORDING TO MAJOR MOTHER-TONGUES
(1961 Census Figures)

Police Stations	Bengali	Hindi	Urdu	Sāntāli	Mundāri	Kurukh/ Orāon
Hili	28,029	2,656	3	3,075	1,579	1,184
Bālurghāt	88,320	7,146	4	16,764	3,625	3,741
Kumārganj	49,390	2,125	12	14,382	358	863
Gangārāmpur	67,615	3,239	27	11,854	507	2,258
Tapan	64,672	2,773	100	12,833	202	8,671
Rāiganj	128,245	10,649	127	9,729	532	592
Kāliāganj	82,497	6,797	67	4,024	..	8
Kushmandi	60,548	1,923	39	5,900	4,719	221
Itāhār	91,229	3,105	35	10,289	..	6
Hemtābād	43,054	1,435	53	2,143	..	15
Bangshihāri	53,169	3,399	373	15,221	1	..
Islāmpur	51,135	4,855	31,059	648	..	..
Choprā	54,291	1,813	9,385	1,509	91	725
Karandighi	58,058	5,412	1,524	9,059	23	719
Goālpokhar	35,559	13,950	91,426	5,564	..	49
TOTAL:	955,811	71,277	134,234	122,994	11,637	19,052

Source: Office of the Superintendent of Census Operations, West Bengal.

POPULATION ACCORDING TO RELIGIONS
(1961 Census Figures)

Hindus	792,534
Muslims	521,758
Christians	8,491
Persons professing other religions	1,014
TOTAL POPULATION	1,323,797

Source: Office of the Superintendent of Census Operations, West Bengal.

SCHEDULED CASTES AND SCHEDULED TRIBES FOUND IN THE DISTRICT IN THE 1961 CENSUS

SCHEDULED CASTES

Bagdi, Baiti, Bauri Bediya, Beldar, Bhogta, Bhuiya, Bhuimali, Bind, Chamar, Chaupal, Doai or Dai, Damai (Nepali), Dhobi or Dhoba or Rajak, Dom, Dosadh, Ghasi, Gonrhi, Hari, Jalia Kaibartta, Kadar, Kami (Nepali), Kandra, Kaora, Karenga, Kaur, Keyot, Khaira, Khatik, Koch, Konai, Konwar, Kotal, Lalbegi, Lohar, Mahar, Mallah, Mal, Malo or Jhalo Malo, Mehtor, Musahar, Namasudra, Nat, Nuniya, Paliya, Pan, Pasi, Patni, Pod or Poundra, Rajbanshi, Rajbar or Rajwar, Sarki (Nepali), Sunri, Tiyar, Turi.

SCHEDULED TRIBES

Bhumij, Bhutia, Chakma, Garo, Hajang, Ho, Karmali, Kora, Lepcha, Lodha, Magh, Mahali, Mahli, Mal Pahariya, Mech, Mru, Munda, Nagesia, Oraon, Rabha, Santal, Sauria Paharia.

Source: Office of the Superintendent of Census Operations, West Bengal.

CHAPTER IV

AGRICULTURE AND IRRIGATION

The district of West Dinājpur is situated in the Gangetic plain between the Himalayas and the Ganges. The district has been formed mainly by the actions of the rivers Tistā-Karatoyā and the Mahānandā and the off-shoots of the Tistā-Karatoyā which are the Tāngan, the Punarbhavā and the Ātrāi. The country slopes gently from north to south and the general trend of the rivers is in the same direction.

Soil. The soil of West Dinājpur is alluvial in the western part and non-alluvial in the eastern half. The non-alluvial portion is an extension of the Rājmahal system of hills. It has red soil and the Rājmahal flat land soil. In the western half of the northern portion mainly consisting of the Islāmpur sub-division the soil is akin to the Tistā alluvial. It is lighter in texture and highly acidic in reaction. It is poor in bases, and there are big areas where deficiencies of all plant nutrients including trace element occur. In many places raw humus deposits are still evident, maintained in their position due to high acid which has prevented bacteriological oxidation. In the southern part of the eastern half, consisting of the Karandighi, Rāiganj, Hemtābād, Kushmandi, Kāliāganj and Itāhār police stations, the soil is Gangetic riverine with occasional flat lands interspersed. This area is derived mostly by the alluvial action of the Ganges and its tributaries and has soils rich in calcium and bases. The soils vary from sandy loam, loam, silty clay to silt. Visually the soils of the north and north-western part appear as coloured. This is generally known locally as *pali* and is very retentive of moisture and is capable of producing two crops. Parts of the *thana* of Bangshihāri, Gangārāmpur, Bālurghāt, Hili, Tapan, eastern part of Itāhār and Kushmandi have reddish soil. The texture of soil in the high lands is sandy loam, and in the low lands stiff clay. This area is locally known as *khiār* and is a mono-cropped area. In the *khiār* area isolated patches of lighter soil are to be found here and there. On both sides of the river alluvial deposits of silty loam and sandy loam occur.

At times the rivers Ātrāi, Punarbhavā, Mahānandā and Tāngan are in spate and inundate their banks. This inundated area grows *boro* or spring rice. Common rotation in the alluvial area is paddy-pulses, paddy-potato, jute-potato and jute-pulses. Given irrigation, this area is capable of producing a number of crops.

(a) LAND RECLAMATION AND UTILISATION

The total area of the district as it is constituted today, is 1,313,280 acres (531,878 ha). Out of this, in 1958-59, the net area sown amounted to 1,132,800 acres (458,784 ha). This means that 86 per cent of the total area of the district was used for agricultural purposes in 1958-59. As the net area sown in the district in 1951 is not known, it is not possible to draw a strict comparison between the condition of agriculture as in 1951 with that existing in 1958-59. Figures for 1949-50 for the old district of West Dinājpur, i.e., the sub-divisions of Bālurghāt and Rāiganj taken together, are available. It appears that the net area sown amounted to 633,800 acres (256,689 ha) in the old district of West Dinājpur in 1949-50. This net area sown amounted to 81.5 per cent of the total area of the district as it was then constituted. This shows the tremendous rate at which marginal land is being put to agricultural use. This inference is supported from the figures relating to net area sown in 1952-53 in the old district of West Dinājpur. It appears from Table No. 8.6 at page 104 of the book entitled *A Brief Agricultural Geography of West Bengal* by Shri S. N. Mukherjea, Statistical Officer, Directorate of Agriculture, West Bengal, that in 1952-53 the net area sown amounted to 78 per cent of the total area of the district as it was constituted at that time.

Between 1953-56, 1,070 acres (433 ha) were reclaimed with the help of tractors provided by the Agriculture Department, and Rs. 120,095 were disbursed during the same period as loans for land reclamation in National Extension Service Block areas. The major portion of the land reclamation was, therefore, brought about by private enterprise. This private enterprise must have been induced by the increasing pressure of population.

Drainage and reclamation of marshy and low-lying areas.

Quite a number of *bils* or marshes has been reclaimed, thereby removing the threat of flooding of adjacent areas during the rainy season. It appears from a list of such drainage schemes received from the Executive Engineer, Malda Irrigation Division, that two such schemes were executed in the Hili police station, two in Bālurghāt police station, three in Kāliāganj police station, one in Kushmandi police station, two in Rāiganj police station and two in Itāhār police station. The purpose of such drainage schemes would become apparent by reproducing here the note on the Rānipur *bil* drainage scheme in police station Itāhār furnished by the Executive Engineer, Malda Irrigation Division:

"The area in question is situated on the east of river Gamari and subjected to inundation by the flood water of river Gamari. There is an existing channel which connects this area with the river Gamari, by which drainage of the local area is accomplished, whenever

the river Gamari is in its low spate. The bank of the river Gamari as well as the general ground level in the locality is lower than the high flood level of the rains and as such during high flood, the bank of the river Gamari is over topped and the whole area in question is submerged. In order to protect the area from the damages of floods the following works have been taken up:—(1) Construction of an embankment along the left bank of river Gamari to prevent flood waters of river Gamari entering the area in question, and (2) Construction of a sluice to prevent early floods entering into low area and also to relieve internal drainage when the river goes down."

The *zamindāri* embankment at Churāmon in police stations of Bangshihāri and Kushmandi has been raised and strengthened by the Irrigation Department as a measure of flood protection. Another scheme worthy of note is the regulator over Gayalkhari in police station Gangārāmpur. Under this scheme a regulator has been constructed by the side of Gangārāmpur-Tapan road about one hundred and fifty feet (about forty-six m) upstream from the pile bridge at Indranārāyanpur. The object is to reclaim the low areas of the *mauzas* of Indranārāyanpur, Purānpur, Rāmchandrapur, Gangārāmpur, Rāmgāon, etc., and make them fit for cultivation as also for protection of the area from early floods of the river Punarbhavā. Two similar schemes are under execution, viz., the Pashuā *bil* drainage scheme and the Dāngā *bil* regulator scheme (since completed); the Pashuā and Dāngā *bils* are situated in Kumārganj and Bālurghāt police stations respectively.

(b) IRRIGATION

Irrigation facilities.

The Irrigation Department has not yet executed any scheme for supplying water for the purpose of irrigation. Cultivation in the district is, therefore, mostly dependent on rainfall except for some volume of water which is available for irrigation from tanks improved under the Bengal Tanks Improvement Act, 1939, and from lift irrigation with the help of pumps purchased with loans granted by the Agriculture Department. The area benefited by lift irrigation with the aid of pumps purchased with the help of the Agriculture Department is 35,120 acres (14,224 ha). The Tanks Improvement Department improved 222 tanks by 1960-61, at a cost of approximately Rs. 514,552, providing irrigation benefit to about 5,659 acres (2,292 ha). 13 small irrigation schemes were executed by the Agriculture Department during 1959-60 at a cost of Rs. 37,165 and the area benefited was barely 931 acres (377 ha). Four exploratory deep tube-wells have been sunk in the district for exploring the feasibility of

providing irrigation water through deep tube-wells and the results are yet to be evaluated. There are also schemes to utilize the water of the six main rivers in the district for irrigation.

The activities of the Tanks Improvement Department merit more than a passing mention as there are approximately 29,000 tanks in the district. If properly improved, these tanks may provide much of the needed irrigation water for cultivation. By 1960-61 the Agriculture Department executed 161 small irrigation schemes, the total area benefited by such schemes being 16,601 acres (6,723 ha).

The small irrigation schemes of the Agriculture Department are schemes the cost of execution of which does not exceed Rs. 10,000. Under such a scheme the water of a small rivulet can also be utilized for the purpose of irrigation by constructing an earthen dam at a suitable place in its course and by digging distributary canals. These methods of irrigation supplement the traditional modes of irrigation by *dones*, swing baskets, etc. ; especially in dry years, water is raised from tanks either by triangular mat baskets (*chhcnāi*) swung by two men from ropes tied at the corners, or by hollowed out tree trunks with a weight at one end (*jat*) which are forced down into the water and allowed to spring up so that a stream of water is projected from the weighted end. The total area under wet cultivation in the district is 1,068,200 acres (432,621 ha).

(c) AGRICULTURE

Major crops.

The major crops grown in the district are *āman*, *āus* and *boro* paddy, jute and *mestā*, mustard, *māshkalāi* (*rabi*), barley, gram, potato, linseed, *māshkalāi* (*khārif*) and sugarcane. Some amount of vegetables also are produced, but the quantity is not very significant so far as export is concerned. The most important crop is *āman* paddy followed by jute (including *mestā*). As much as 55.52 per cent of the total cropped area is utilized for the cultivation of *āman* paddy, while jute and *mestā* account for 15.32 per cent. *Āus* paddy comes next, occupying 11.47 per cent of the cropped area, and is followed by mustard which accounts for 4.93 per cent. 3.91 per cent, 2.30 per cent and 1.53 per cent of the cropped area are utilized for cultivation of *māshkalāi* (*rabi*), barley and gram respectively. The other crops do not singly account for even one per cent of the cropped area. These figures relate to the year 1959-60, and to the district as it exists now.

It is not possible to undertake a review of the position in regard to the area under each of the principal crops in the district since 1949-50 as the information on this head, relating to the Islāmpur sub-division is not available separately either for that year or for any other year.

Yield of major crops.

The average yield per acre of *āman* paddy varies from 13 maunds per acre (1,198 kg per ha) in Itāhār police station to 18 maunds per acre (1,659 kg per ha) in Bālurghāt and Gangārāmpur police stations. The average yield of *āus* paddy varies from 12 maunds per acre (1,106 kg per ha) in Kumārganj police station to 17.2 maunds per acre (1,585 kg per ha) in Bālurghāt police station. On an average, between 300 and 500 maunds of sugarcane per acre (27,644 and 46,074 kg per ha) can be obtained depending on the type of soil and precipitation, while in the unirrigated areas the average yield rate of mustard varies from 3 to 5 maunds per acre (276 to 461 kg per ha) in areas other than Kumārganj police station where the yield is as much as 9 maunds per acre (829 kg per ha). However, cultivation of mustard with improved seeds under irrigated conditions yielded upto 14 maunds per acre (1,291 kg per ha). These figures indicate the prospect of crops in the district with better seed and the benefit of irrigation. For the years 1947-48 to 1952-53 the average yield rates of *āman* and *āus* paddy, sugarcane and mustard were respectively 8.7, 7.95, 476.08 and 4.46 maunds per acre (801.69, 732.58, 43,869.89 and 410.98 kg per ha). The yield rates of *āman* and *āus* paddy have increased significantly since 1952-53. The figures of production of some of the principal crops in 1958-59 and the annual averages for the years 1949-50 to 1958-59 are given in tabular form at the end of the Chapter.

Subsidiary crops (including fruits).

Subsidiary crops in the district include *masur* (*rabi*), *khesāri* (*rabi*), pepper, wheat, *tur*, *mung* (*rabi*), maize, tobacco and fruits like mango, jackfruit, papaya, plum (*ber*), blackberry (*jām*), guava and *bel*. The jackfruit is of specially good quality. This superior quality of the jackfruit of North Bengal was also noticed by Hiuen-Tsang. The average yield rate of chillies is fairly high in the district (about 10 maunds per acre or 921 kg per ha) but improved methods of cultivation of even local varieties produce 15 maunds per acre (1,382 kg per ha) of dry chillies. Banana grows very well in about all police stations of the district. Fruits are very tasteful and attractive in size.

Cocoanut is conspicuous by its absence. This is due to lack of salinity in the soil. Palmyra trees and arecanut trees are grown. Date palms are as stunted as in other parts of West Bengal.

Modes of cultivation.

Āman paddy takes a fairly long time to raise. The seedbed has to be prepared in early part of June, immediately after the first showers of the month, and the seeds sown. The time of sowing of seeds is so regulated that the date of sowing is approximately three weeks to one month preceding the day of transplantation. The field in which the seedlings are to be transplanted have to be thoroughly ploughed and levelled after mixing whatever quantity of manure the peasant is able to afford. Some amount of water must accumulate in the

field before transplantation can take place and the seedlings are transplanted mostly in July during years of normal rainfall. It is necessary that at the time of and immediately after transplantation, sunny days should occur with occasional rainy days as uninterrupted rain for days on end would kill the seedlings. Practice of weeding or interculture is not common in this district. Some cultivators carry out the weeding operations once after transplantation. The crop matures in the month of December and is harvested.

The *āus* paddy is sown in summer and the seeds are usually broadcast. There is no need to transplant *āus* paddy usually but in some places transplantation is done. The paddy ripens in the month of *bhādra* and that is why it is also known as the *bhādui dhān*. The resultant rice is usually heavier and coarser than that obtained from *āman* paddy.

Jute is usually cultivated in low lands or lands having a sufficiently high rainfall. Both the varieties of jute are grown in this district. The low land variety commonly known as *deshi* or *titā pāṭ* (*C. capsularis*) occupies the major area while *toshā* or high land variety (*C. olitorius*) grows only in high lands.

Mestā (*H. subdariffa*) is grown generally in upper situations with poorer soils. It occupies a very large area particularly in light soils of Islāmpur and Rāiganj sub-divisions. *Mestā* requires very little looking after. The advantage of *mestā* lies in the fact that it can be cut and retted any time after it has become mature, at the convenience of the cultivator. Lack of proper water for retting stands in the way of producing high quality jute. Mustard is usually sown in rotation in October.

Traditional agricultural implements.

The agricultural implements used in the district are extremely primitive in nature, and the description of these given by Dr. Buchanan (Hamilton) in early nineteenth century may perhaps be used with a fair degree of accuracy even today in describing them. According to Dr. Buchanan,

> "The plough is of the wretched construction usual in India, and has neither coulter to cut the soil, nor mould-board to turn it over. In some parts of the district it even wants the share, or small piece of iron that usually strengthens the point. . . . .
>
> "The *Moyi* is an instrument made of two bambús about six feet in length, which are joined together by some cross bars like a ladder. It is used to cover the seed, and to smooth the field like a rolling stone, ... ; it is yoked to two oxen, and the driver usually stands on it to give it weight.
>
> "The *bida* or *nangol* is a rake with wooden teeth, which is drawn by two oxen, and is employed only in free soils, where it thins the crops of rice that have been sown broad-cast, and have come up too thick. . . . . ."

Progress of scientific agriculture and activities of the Agriculture Department to ensure it.

Mechanized cultivation is not possible as the fields are mostly small and as co-operative farming has not progressed to any significant degree. The peasantry is too poor to take to the use of improved farm implements which have been attempted to be introduced in the district by the Agriculture Department. The improvement in the yield of crops is, therefore, to be mainly ascribed to the supply of artificial manures as also new types of manures like green manures and compost. These new types of manure have supplemented the traditional use of cow-dung and tank silt. Then again the efforts of the Agriculture Department in bringing about an improvement in the method of paddy cultivation have apparently borne some fruit especially in so far as the Japanese method of paddy cultivation is concerned.

Manures and seeds.—Improved agricultural practices

Another factor which is responsible for the increased yield rates is the supply of improved quality of seeds. Seven agricultural farms have been established at the headquarters of the police stations of Kumārganj, Tapan, Bangshihāri, Kāliāganj, Rāiganj, Hemtābād and Itāhār in addition to the existing seed multiplication farm at Mājhiān, police station Bālurghāt. Although the quantity of improved variety of seeds produced in these farms is not sufficient to meet the demand, even the insufficient supply of improved seeds has made the peasantry realise the importance of using seeds of good quality for cultivation, and these are being multiplied with the help of selected growers for meeting the total demand. Rotation of crops is practised mostly by allowing the fields to lie fallow after the crop is gathered. This rule is departed from in the case of *rabi* crops like mustard which are grown on the same fields after *āus* paddy has been harvested. A similar rotation is practised between jute and some varieties of *āman* paddy. This is not possibly true rotation as the object of rotation is to supply the deficiency in a particular element due to the raising of a particular crop, by growing another crop that would by a natural process restore that element to the soil.

Use of plant protection materials.

Along with introduction of improved seeds, fertilizers, composts, green manuring with the help of *dhainchā*, etc., the Agriculture Department has been trying to persuade the peasantry to use modern insecticides and fungicides for saving their crops from pests and diseases. The response has been encouraging and the problem now is to ensure adequate supply of plant protection chemicals and the requisite equipment.

Improved methods of agriculture are being demonstrated with the help of demonstration plots. The procedure consists in cultivating one half of a particular selected plot of land by improved agricultural techniques, leaving the other half to be cultivated according to the traditional procedure. The Japanese method of paddy cultivation has also been widely

demonstrated and a number of cultivators has already adopted this improved technique of paddy cultivation.

Annual agricultural exhibitions also help in high-lighting the benefits of improved methods of cultivation.

(d) ANIMAL HUSBANDRY AND FISHERIES

Livestock and measures for their improvement.—Animal diseases and veterinary hospitals.

It appears from the Livestock Census which was conducted in 1956 that the district had a total bovine population of 872,006. Of this number, 60,972 were buffaloes and 811,034 were cattle. Goats numbered 325,543 and sheep 6,131. There were 24,916 pigs. Horses numbered a mere 4,515. For all these animals, no regular cultivation of fodder is undertaken. Paddy straw and grass are the two principal items of diet for these animals. Milch cattle are sometimes given some oilseed with rice straw. The quality of the cattle is very poor, as a consequence of which yield of milk per milch cattle is quite low. The Department of Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Services in the Dairy Development and Animal Husbandry Directorate has in hand a number of schemes for the improvement of the cattle as also for popularising suitable types of fodder crops but so far, the schemes have not had any conspicuous success. The scheme of castrating scrub bulls and supplying good quality stud bulls is one of such schemes but it has not made much headway so far. The Veterinary Services Directorate of the Department has been trying to reduce mortality of cattle from various diseases. In 1959-60 the Veterinary Services Directorate treated 8,139 cases. There is one 'A' class veterinary hospital at Bālurghāt, one 'B' type veterinary hospital at Islāmpur, and ten veterinary units each in charge of a touring Veterinary Assistant Surgeon. The jurisdictions of the ten Units are as follows:

Itinerant Veterinary Assistant Surgeon,
Bālurghāt, Hili and Bangshihāri.

Veterinary Assistant Surgeon,
Islāmpur Development Block.

Veterinary Assistant Surgeon,
Kāliāganj Development Block.

Veterinary Assistant Surgeon,
Rāiganj Development Block.

Veterinary Assistant Surgeon,
Kumārganj Development Block.

Veterinary Assistant Surgeon,
Gangārāmpur Development Block.

Veterinary Assistant Surgeon,
Hemtābād Development Block.

Veterinary Assistant Surgeon,
Itāhār Development Block.

Veterinary Assistant Surgeon,
Karandighi Development Block.

Veterinary Assistant Surgeon,
Tapan Development Block.

Of the 8,139 cases treated in 1959-60, 77 were cases of castration, 17 of anthrax and only 6 of foot and mouth diseases.

Poultry-farming.

The poultry of the district are usually of the indigenous variety. During the year 1956-57, 583,315 fowls and 219,641 ducks were found in the district. There is no organised poultry farm in the district, the poultry being kept by the farmers as a subsidiary means of livelihood. During the Second Plan period only 6,845 improved types of poultry birds were introduced into the district. Since 1951-52, the veterinary staff have been carrying on a campaign to inoculate poultry birds against epidemic diseases like *raniket* disease, chicken cholera and chicken pox.

Fisheries.

Fishes are available in all the rivers in the district.

The number of tanks in the district is quite considerable and the Department of Fisheries has been trying to encourage pisciculture in those tanks. With this end in view, a number of schemes were formulated and executed in the district. Under the scheme for the improvement of tank fisheries, derelict tanks were sought to be improved for the purpose of pisciculture. A loan of Rs. 175 to Rs. 200 per *bighā* of water area was admissible to the owner of such a tank, the loan being repayable in eight years. Between 1950-51 and 1955-56, Rs. 93,255 were advanced as loan to 297 beneficiaries. Up to 1955-56 the amount realised was Rs. 82,190. Under the Union Tank Fishery Development Scheme a loan of Rs. 60 per *bighā* of water area was admissible for augmenting fish production in culturable tanks. Between 1950-51 and 1955-56, the total amount advanced under this scheme was Rs. 90,000 out of which Rs. 87,141.50 nP. were realised during the same period. The number of beneficiaries was 463. Under the Short Term Loan Scheme, which was applicable only to culturable tanks, Rs. 19,745 were advanced between 1956-57 and 1960-61 to 123 beneficiaries. Under this scheme the amount admissible as loan is the same as under the Union Tank Fishery Development Scheme, but the period of re-payment is three years in place of two years in the former case. There was also another scheme for the improvement of derelict tanks for the purpose

of pisciculture but the term of re-payment was seven years and the amount of loan admissible was also between Rs. 200 and Rs. 300 per *bighā* of water area. Between 1956-57 and 1960-61, 126 persons were benefited from this scheme. The amount received by them as loan was Rs. 36,380. In addition, there were schemes for assisting needy fishermen and co-operative societies formed by them, for acquiring fishing implements such as nets and boats, for the increase of production of carp fry, for the encouragement of the system of manuring ponds, for providing food for the fish, and for demonstrating scientific methods of pisciculture. Besides these schemes, the Department of Fisheries also helped in the import of 1,565,800 carp fry from Calcutta by air in oxygenated polythene bags containing water. The *Paschim Dinājpur Matsya Chās-O-Samrakshan Samiti* and the Balurghat Fishermen's Co-operative Society participated in the scheme of importing carp fry from Calcutta for re-stocking the ponds in the district.

(e) STATE ASSISTANCE TO AGRICULTURE

State assistance to agriculture is extended in the shape of agricultural loans, cattle purchase loans and fertilizer loans. All these loans are advanced by the Collector of the district out of the money allotted by the Government. The agricultural loans and the cattle purchase loans are granted under the Agriculturists' Loans Act, 1884. The amount advanced by way of agricultural loans, cattle purchase loans and fertilizer loans for the years 1958-59, 1959-60 and 1960-61 are shown in the statement below:

	1958-59	1959-60	1960-61
Agricultural Loans	1,400,000	450,000	640,000
Cattle Purchase Loans	100,200	100,000	100,000
Fertilizer Loans	22,000	25,000	120,000

Besides, certain types of loans such as reclamation and irrigation loans, loans for productive schemes for promotion of agriculture, etc., are also advanced to the cultivators from the provision for Miscellaneous Agricultural Schemes in the budgets of the Development Blocks. Cattle purchase loans are advanced to deserving cultivators in order to enable them to purchase bullocks for the plough. The agricultural loans advanced by the Collector are given more for the alleviation of distress than for the improvement of agriculture. Agriculturists derive more benefit from the crop loans which are advanced by the co-operative societies to their members. The amount advanced to each person by the co-operative societies is generally higher than the corres-

ponding amount advanced by the Collector under the Agriculturists' Loans Act. In 1957-58 Rs. 12.25 lakhs were advanced to the members by the co-operative societies in the district; in 1958-59 the amount was Rs. 12.36 lakhs and in 1959-60 the amount was Rs. 18.65 lakhs.

(f) FLOODS, FAMINES AND DROUGHTS

Floods.

The district is fortunate enough to have escaped natural visitations like cyclones, floods and earthquakes. There was a severe cyclone in 1787 but full details of the damage wrought by it are lacking. Large areas of the district were inundated in 1787 when the Tistā changed its course but the damage was felt mainly in the district of Rangpur. There are annual floods in parts of the district due to over-flowing of the banks of some of the rivers along some portions of their courses. Particular mention might be made of the lands situated between the Tāngan and the Punarbhavā. The damage to crops has never been very severe. An account of a serious flood that has come down to us took place in 1892 but its ravages were felt more in that portion of the undivided district of Dinājpur which falls within Pakistan than in the area which constitute the present district. In the flood of 1892 the town of Dinājpur itself suffered, the river responsible having been the Ātrāi. Large numbers of the inhabitants of the northern and the eastern quarters of the town of Dinājpur became homeless as a result of the flood. The railway line was breached and mails had to be transported for some distance by boat. The big North Bengal flood of September and October, 1922, did not cause any appreciable damage in the district. In recent years no serious flood has taken place.

Earthquake.

An earthquake which requires to be noticed is the one which took place in 1897. This earthquake caused considerable damage to buildings. The other earth tremors recorded within the district do not qualify for the term 'earthquake'.

Droughts.—The consequent famines and scarcities.—Relief operations.

Famines have occurred in the district as a result of drought. The lack of rainfall stands in the way of agriculture and results in a scarcity of foodgrains. The earliest famine of which any record is available is the one of 1769-70. This district, along with the other districts of Bengal, suffered great hardships during that famine. The next record of a scarcity of food-grains relates to the year 1865-66 when the price of rice showed almost one hundred per cent rise in the year. The scarcity of 1865-66 was, however, not considered to be serious and no special measures had to be adopted for restoring normal price levels.

There was a very severe famine in 1873-74 in the whole of Northern Bengal. The district of West Dinājpur naturally suffered from this famine. The circumstances which brought

about the famine were thus described by the Hon'ble Sir Richard Temple, the then Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal:

> "In Bengal and Bihar, after a season of extraordinary heat during May and June of 1873, the rain did not begin till late, that is in July, and even then was scanty. It lasted more or less, but never abundantly, till the end of August, when it for the most part ceased prematurely. Enough had, however, fallen to secure a fair yield of the crops which are reaped in August and September. Little or none fell during the months of September, October, and November, that is during the whole autumnal season, when heavy showers are indispensable for ensuring the maturity of the rice crop of December (the most important of all the crops), and for sowing the crops which are to be reaped in the following spring. As experience showed that the consequences of drought are sometimes averted by rain even at the last moment, hope was not abandoned till the end of October. Not till then could it be seen whether the apprehension of failure of the crops would be realised or not. By that time, however, it became certain that widespread and heavy loss must occur in the December crops ; that the sowing of the spring crop must be short ; and that the germinating and growing of what had been sown must be jeopardised. . . . The injury to the young spring crops might yet be repaired, if rain should fall between the end of December and the beginning of February. Fear was chiefly felt for Bihar and for the north part of Bengal, but largely also for all the rest of Bengal save the eastern part in the basin of the Brahmaputra, and the deltaic region in the south, which depends on inundation rather than on rainfall."

By March even the reserved stock of food-grains kept from the preceding year had become exhausted. The stock of rice in the market was quite insufficient to meet the demand and the price of rice rose to unprecedented levels. The police stations which were severely affected were the police stations of Kāliāganj, Rāiganj and Hemtābād. Relief works were opened in those areas in April, 1874 and gratuitous relief was also distributed on an extensive scale The relief works consisted chiefly of the construction of new roads and the repair of old ones. A large number of tanks were also excavated or re-excavated.

In the years 1891 and 1897 partial failures of crops occurred and the price of essential commodities increased. The scarcity in these years could be tackled comparatively easily but something like a famine again made its appearance in the district in 1908-1909. The cause of this famine was again continued drought throughout the months of June, July

and August, as a result of which there was a total loss of winter rice, i.e., *āman* rice, in the police stations of Hemtābād, Rāiganj, Itāhār and almost all over the Bālurghāt sub-division. The *rabi* crop was also a failure for want of moisture except in Kāliāganj and Gangārāmpur where a small crop of chillies was obtained. According to the Collector of the district, the real distress was due not so much to a shortage of stocks in the market, which were ample, nor to high prices, but rather to the inability of the people to buy food and the contraction of credit. According to him the shortage of money was due to the fact that in the previous year when the price of rice suddenly went up with surprising rapidity to the almost unprecedented figure of Rs. 3-12-0 per maund, the cultivators promptly sold their entire stock and, in some cases, even seed-grain. Relief works were started in Rāiganj, Itāhār and Hemtābād. Gratuitous relief was also given on an extensive scale. The famine passed off next year when there was again normal rainfall.

In 1929 there was again a scarcity in Bālurghāt sub-division and as much as Rs. 559,975 had to be advanced as agricultural loans for the alleviation of distress. In 1938 also there was a failure of *āman* crop in the same areas for which Rs. 97,000 had to be given as agricultural loans.

There was failure of rainfall in the agricultural season of 1957 as a result of which there was partial failure of crop in almost the whole of Rāiganj sub-division, in parts of Islāmpur sub-division and in the police stations of Tapan and Gangārāmpur in the Bālurghāt sub-division. Due to a timely lack of appreciation of the situation, 8 lakh maunds (about 30,000 tonnes) of rice were exported out of the district in 1958 immediately after the *āman* rice of 1957 had been harvested, thereby aggravating the scarcity. Relief works had to be undertaken on a large scale in the affected areas and continued until the *bhādui* crop came to the market. The rainfall in 1958 was more or less adequate and the relief operation had to cope with the shortfall of the previous year. As many as 878 roads were repaired and 47 new roads constructed. The total length of the roads repaired was 1,734 miles (2,792 km) while the total length of the newly constructed roads was approximately 197 miles (317 km). In addition, 14 embankments were constructed, the total mileage being 74 miles (119 km). 12 tanks were also renovated. These tanks were renovated on the condition that the owner made a free gift of those tanks to the Government for use of the general public. The amount of expenditure was Rs. 775,890 in cash and 138,960 maunds (5,186 t) of rice and wheat in kind. Gratuitous relief was also distributed but the distribution was limited only to helpless persons who had nobody to support them. The relief works were closed down at the beginning of August, 1958 and it was not necessary to resume them in the following year.

AREA UNDER PRINCIPAL CROPS, 1959-60

[Net area sown ... ... 1,137,800 acres (458,784 ha)
Total cropped area ... .. 1,381,200 acres (559,386 ha)]

	(In acres) (Hectares mentioned in brackets)
Area under *Āman*	766,900 (310,594)
Area under *Āus*	158,500 (64,192)
Area under Jute (including *Mestā*)	211,600 (85,698)
Area under Mustard	68,100 (27,580)
Area under *Māshkalāi* (*rabi*)	54,100 (21,910)
Area under Barley	31,900 (12,919)
Area under Gram	21,200 (8,586)

Source: Government of West Bengal, Agriculture Department.

PRODUCTION OF SOME PRINCIPAL CROPS

(In thousand maunds)
(Figures in thousand quintals mentioned in brackets)

Crops	Production in 1958-59 (Provisional figures)		Average annual production during 1949-50 to 1958-59	
Āman	8,223.2	(3,068.9)	5,107.9	(1,906.27)
Āus	1,265.7	(472.36)	778.2	(290.42)
Boro	8.0	(2.99)	1.6*	(0.60)
Total Rice	9,496.9	(3,544.24)	5,887.5	(2,197.21)
Jute**	393.0		146.9	
Mustard (including rape)	330.2	(123.23)	213.2	(79.57)
Barley	136.6	(50.96)	67.2	(25.08)
Gram	202.4	(75.54)	74.8	(27.91)

Source: Statistical Abstract, 1959 (Government of West Bengal, State Satistical Bureau, Calcutta, 1962). Some of the figures have been revised by the Agriculture Department.

* Average of nine years.
** Thousand bales of 400 lbs. each.

LIVESTOCK POPULATION

(1956 Livestock Census figures)

MALE CATTLE OVER 3 YEARS

1. Breeding bulls (including bulls employed for both breeding and work)	4,662	
2. Working bulls and bullocks	341,485	
3. Bulls and bullocks not in use for breeding or work	4,975	
		351,122

FEMALE CATTLE OVER 3 YEARS			
1. Females for work only		5,724	
2. Cows kept for breeding and milk production:			
(a) Not calved on 15th April, 1956	36,556		
(b) In milk on 15th April, 1956	88,507		
(c) Dry on 15th April, 1956	92,956		
		218,019	
3. Females not in use for breeding or milk production		2,963	
			226,706
CATTLE (YOUNGSTOCK) *i.e.* 3 YEARS AND BELOW			
1. Males:			
(a) Below 1 year	46,679		
(b) 1 to 3 years	63,723		
		110,402	
2. Females:			
(a) Below 1 year	42,692		
(b) 1 to 3 years	80,112		
		122,804	
			233,206
MALE BUFFALOES OVER 3 YEARS			
1. Breeding bulls (including bulls employed for both breeding and work)		419	
2. Working bulls and bullocks		47,356	
3. Bulls not in use for breeding or work and bullocks not in use for work		250	
			48,025
FEMALE BUFFALOES OVER 3 YEARS			
1. Female for work only		1,678	
2. She-buffaloes kept for breeding or milk production:			
(a) Not calved on 15th April, 1956	856		
(b) In milk on 15th April, 1956	2,889		
(c) Dry on 15th April, 1956	2,050		
		5,795	
3. Females not in use for breeding or milk production		135	
			7,608
BUFFALOES (YOUNGSTOCK) i.e. 3 YEARS AND BELOW			
1. Males:			
(a) Below 1 year	1,458		
(b) 1 to 3 years	1,197		
		2,655	
2. Females:			
(a) Below 1 year	1,400		
(b) 1 to 3 years	1,284		
		2,684	
			5,339

Sheep				
1. Males:				
(a) Upto 1 year	974			
(b) Over 1 year	1,363	2,337		
2. Females:				
(a) Upto 1 year	1,096			
(b) Over 1 year	2,698	3,794	6,131	
Goats				
1. Males:				
(a) Upto 1 year	58,107			
(b) Over 1 year	75,040	133,147		
2. Females:				
(a) Upto 1 year	47,170			
(b) Over 1 year	145,226	192,396	325,543	
Horses				
1. Males:				
(a) Upto 1 year	425			
(b) 1 to 3 years	1,236			
(c) Over 3 years	1,030	2,691		
2. Females:				
(a) Upto 1 year	363			
(b) 1 to 3 years	766			
(c) Over 3 years	695	1,824	4,515	
Other Animals				
Pigs			24,916	
Donkeys:				
1. Males		44		
2. Females		29	73	
Elephants			1	
Camels			3	
Mules			9	
Total Livestock:				1,233,197
Poultry				
Fowls:				
1. Hens		187,561		
2. Cocks		126,163		
3. Chickens		269,591	583,315	
Ducks:				
1. Ducks		77,630		
2. Drakes		66,408		
3. Ducklings		75,603	219,641	
Others:			15,319	
Total Poultry				818,275

Source: Directorate of Agriculture, Government of West Bengal.

CHAPTER V

INDUSTRIES

(a) OLD-TIME INDUSTRIES

The district of West Dinājpur is mainly agricultural. The bulk of the export from the district consists of agricultural produce but there are references in early times to some manufactured articles which assumed an all-India fame. One such article was the variety of cotton fabric known in ancient Indian literature as *kshauma*. This variety of fabric has been mentioned in the *Arthashāstra* of Kauṭilya as a product of the Pauṇḍra region. Another product of the Pauṇḍra country was a soft black silk fabric. Some kind of coarse jute fabric was also produced in the time of Emperor Akbar.

It appears from the letter which Mr. George Hatch, the then Collector of the district of Dinājpur, wrote to the Board of Revenue in December, 1787 that the main articles of produce of the district were grain, silk, cloth and jaggery. So far as manufacture of silk is concerned, it must be borne in mind that at the time when the letter was written, the district of Dinājpur contained the whole of Māldā and that portion of Dinājpur which is now in East Pakistan. In the absence of concrete evidence it is difficult to say whether silk formed an important item of produce of the district of West Dinājpur. So far as grain, cloth and jaggery are concerned, however, it can be said with confidence that these articles were produced towards the end of the nineteenth century in the area which now comprises the district of West Dinājpur. The East India Company had a Resident in Māldā town who was in charge of the commercial side of the Company's activities in the district of Dinājpur. It appears from the correspondence between Mr. Hatch, the Collector of the district, and the Resident at Māldā, Mr. Udney, that there were a number of weavers in the *parganās* of Mahinagar, Santosh and Malduār. Most of the weavers sold their produce to the Resident of Māldā and the Resident took especial pains to obtain for them concessions from the Collector regarding the payment of rent on the lands held by them but his efforts were not crowned with success. Mr. Hatch reported to the Board on the state of cotton cultivation and production of cotton textile in his district in the year 1789. According to him there were some lands on which cotton was grown and the rent of cotton land was the same as that paid for arable land in general. The quantity of cotton grown in the district was not, however, sufficient to meet the local needs, and between 2,500 to 3,000 mds. (93 to 112 t) of cotton used to be imported every year from the districts of Sirhind and Benares. Thread

used to be spun by women. The thread was of three kinds, —fine, middling and coarse. The thread was utilised for the production of cotton fabric worn by the local residents.

(b) INDUSTRIES AND MANUFACTURES OF THE DISTRICT

Location of Industries.—The industrial pattern.

In October 1960, a total number of 7,863 establishments were found in the district by the Census Department, in which some articles were either being produced or being processed or some machinery repaired or serviced. Of these, 653 were located in the urban areas, and 7,210 in rural areas. Processing of foodstuffs occupied the most important place among the industries, and as many as 5,883 establishments in rural and 180 establishments in urban areas were concerned with this industry. Handloom textiles accounted for 267 establishments. In all these establishments handlooms were used for production of the cloth. The largest number of such establishments were located in Rāiganj police station, being 144 in number. The police stations of Choprā and Kushmandi did not contain such establishments while the other police stations contained the remaining 123 establishments between them.

The next important industry is that of tailoring. As many as 275 establishments were found in the district, engaged in the making of textile garments. Manufacture of sundry hardware accounted for 241 establishments, while 211 establishments were found engaged in the production of gold and silver ornaments. The potters accounted for 204 establishments while the number of shops where bicycles were repaired was 162. *Biḍi* was produced in 97 establishments, and manufacture of wooden furniture and fixtures accounted for 53 establishments.

An idea of the relative importance of the various industries can be obtained from the above figures. It is interesting to note that the pattern has not changed very much through the years except for the inclusion of a modern industry like bicycle repairing. Of the establishments dealing with production of foodstuffs, only 3,226 were found engaged in production of rice, *āṭṭā*, flour, etc., while as many as 2,470 establishments were found engaged in production of edible fats and oils (other than hydrogenated oil). The oil in almost all cases is mustard oil. Production of mustard oil is thus an important industry in the district. Of the rice and *āṭṭā* mills as many as 28 are run with electricity and 118 on liquid fuel. The establishments utilising liquid fuel utilise engines run on diesel oil mostly. Taking all the industries, it was found that the number of establishments using machines run on liquid fuel was 126 while that using machinery run on electricity was 37. 20 establishments used machines run on coal, wood or bagasse. The remaining 7,680 establishments were run by human or animal power.

Industrial establishments run with electricity / liquid fuel / without power.

Industrial employment.

It would have been interesting if it had been possible to calculate the number of persons employed in each type of industry from the table of industrial establishments prepared by the Census Department, but as the number of persons employed were not recorded at the time of the industrial survey by the Census staff concerned, in respect of a considerable number of establishments, no useful purpose would be served by calculating the number of persons employed in various industries from that table. The other alternative is to ascertain the number of persons employed in the various industries by referring to the B-IV Table which was prepared after the population Census. It is found from that table that 1,859 persons are employed in production of rice, *āṭṭā*, flour, etc., 1,250 persons are employed in *biḍi* making, 752 persons are engaged in manufacturing cotton textiles in handloom, 698 persons are engaged in making of textile garments, 1,060 persons are engaged in manufacturing wooden furniture and fixtures, 2,889 persons are engaged in manufacture of articles of cork, bamboo, cane, leaves, etc., and 1,405 persons are engaged in manufacture of earthenware and earthen pottery. It appears that due to some reason or other the number of persons engaged in the production of mustard oil was not correctly returned during the population Census. Even from the incomplete return of employment statistics obtained during the industrial survey conducted by the Census Department it appears that there are 2,574 persons employed in the production of mustard oil.

Industrial establishments using power-driven machines.

In 183 or 2.33 per cent of the industrial establishments in the district, power-driven machines are used. The food processing industries alone claim 169 or 92.35 per cent of such establishments. Of the remaining establishments using power-driven machines, 3 are concerned with production of beverages, and ice and ice-cream, and manufacture of tea in factories, 2 are concerned with manufacture of wood and wooden products, 1 relates to the printing and publishing industry, 2 are concerned with repair of radios, etc., 3 are in establishments in which motor vehicles are repaired and serviced, and 3 such establishments are concerned with miscellaneous manufacturing industries.

Other industries.

Due to their smallness in number, some industries have not been specifically mentioned above. These are printing of cotton textiles, jute pressing and bailing, jute spinning and weaving, production of jute rope, manufacture of umbrellas, production of articles from cork, bamboo, cane, etc., manufacture of shoes and other leather work, manufacture of soap and other washing and cleaning compounds, manufacture of bricks and tiles, manufacture of earthen images and statues, manufacture of earthen dolls and so on.

Sugar-pressing.

The manufacture of *gur* from sugar-cane is carried on, on an extensive scale, almost throughout the district. The crushing of the cane and boiling of the juice to make the *gur* is done

by the cultivators themselves. The cane is crushed in a mill worked by a pair of bullocks walking in a circle. The juice is boiled in iron pans, the refuse cane, after it has been squeezed dry, being used as fuel for the fire. The iron pans are of local manufacture. The finished product is a dark thick fluid, which is poured into earthen jars in which it is allowed to solidify. Most of the *gur* manufactured is consumed locally, this kind of raw sugar being an article of diet amongst the people of the district and being largely consumed in the form of sweets.

Mat and basket making

Mats and baskets are in general use all over the district. The matting used for walls, ceilings and floors of houses, compound-fences, boat-roofs and cart-covers is made of lengths of split bamboos woven crosswise, and is both cheap and serviceable. It is called *chāṭāi*. Baskets also are generally made of split bamboo, though cane is sometimes employed for finer work. These baskets are of many kinds and play an important part in the daily life and domestic economy of the people. Different kinds of baskets are used for carrying earth or manure, provisions, fruits and vegetables, washing rice, and many other purposes. The finest examples of the work are the large closely woven baskets used for storing grains, and the hemispherical baskets of different sizes, called *dons*, universally used as grain measures. Small stools (*moḍā*) and cart-covers (*chhai*) of matting and bamboo are also made by these people.

Tea plantation.

There is a tea-garden (Debijhora Tea Estate, a public limited company) in the Choprā police station. The garden has a planted area of 546.62 acres (221.38 ha), and produces about 5,091 maunds (about 190 tonnes) of common tea (both black and green). The tea leaves are processed in the factory attached to the garden. The tea produced is mostly auctioned in the Calcutta market Besides eighteen managerial, technical and clerical employees and one hundred and ten other employees, the garden engages more than six hundred labourers about three-fifths of whom are male labourers and the rest female labourers. There are no child labourers in the garden. The male labourers are paid a total remuneration of Rs. 1.89 nP and the females Rs. 1.76 nP per head per day.

Industrial co-operative societies.

In 1961 there were 59 industrial co-operative societies. Of these, 17 were weavers' co-operative societies, 3 blacksmiths' co-operative societies, 2 societies were engaged in *gur* and *khāndsāri* making, and 1 in *biḍi* making. There were 7 *mahilā samitis* turning out various handicrafts and there were 1 printing press and 1 soap-making undertaking. The number of members of such industrial co-operative societies rose from 279 in 1949-50 to 2,363 in 1960-61. The share capital rose from Rs. 2,027 in 1949-50 to Rs. 36,043 in 1960-61. The loans received by these co-operative societies amounted to Rs. 10,110 in 1949-50, while in 1961 the corresponding figure was Rs. 222,210.

Facilities for training in crafts.

The Department of Industries is trying to introduce new skills in the industrial sector for facilitating the setting up of new industries and also for introducing better techniques in existing industries. With this end in view, as many as 18 training or training-cum-production centres have been opened in the district. 2 of these institutions impart training in weaving, 3 in tailoring, 2 in carpentry, 2 in tanning, 2 in tile making, 1 in foot-wear making, 1 in production of cane and bamboo products and 1 in production of ropes and twines. 2 of the centres impart training to tribals only, while 1 imparts training to members of the schedule castes only. Of the two centres which train up only tribals, one imparts training in production of jute and woollen goods and the other in carpentry, while the training centre that imparts training to members of the schedule castes only deals with jute spinning and weaving. The total number of trained persons turned out by all these 18 training institutions is 200 per year.

(c) POWER

There is no hydro-electric power station in the district. There is one power station at Bālurghāt and another at Rāiganj, both of which utilize diesel engines for rotating the generators. The generating capacity of the Bālurghāt Station is 251 kw while that of the Rāiganj Station is 268 kw. Transmission lines have been erected from Bālurghāt upto Hili and from Bālurghāt to Gangārāmpur. Both the power stations are owned by the West Bengal State Electricity Board. The Balurghat Power House supplies electricity to 768 domestic and commercial consumers while the corresponding figure for the Raiganj Power House is 419. The Raiganj Power House supplies electricity to the towns of Rāiganj and Kāliāganj. The rate for domestic and commercial consumption of electricity supplied by the Balurghat Power House is 44 nP per unit less rebate of 3 nP per unit in case of timely payment. The corresponding rate for Rāiganj is 31 nP per unit less rebate of 3 nP per unit in case of timely payment.

CHAPTER VI

BANKING, TRADE AND COMMERCE

A. Banking and Finance

(a) HISTORY OF INDIGENOUS BANKING

Late eighteenth century.

The earliest reference to the prevalence of the banking system in the district during the administration of the East India Company relates to the years 1787-88 when Mr. George Hatch was the Collector of the district. It appears that it was the practice to transmit sums of money on Government account from Dinājpur to Murshidābād and other places by means of *hundis* issued by private bankers, payable by other private bankers stationed at the places where the amounts were sent. The rate of discount was 3 per cent. These bankers were known as *shroffs* and possibly hailed from other parts of India. The fact that these bankers transacted business for the Government of the day naturally leads to the inference that private banking was well-established at that time. These bankers must have provided capital for the trade in various commodities exported from the district and imported into the district. The following account of the banking system in the nineteenth century has been left by Dr. Buchanan (Hamilton):

Nineteenth century.

> "The proper bankers in this district are confined entirely to the capital, where there are seven houses. The principals live generally at Múrshedabad; but some of them occasionally visit Dinajpúr, and are all of the Osho-yal sect. I have already mentioned, that some of them import certain goods, and they export dry ginger; but their principal business is granting bills of exchange for money. In the Muhammedan government, the revenue was remitted to Múrshedabad through these bankers. This branch of profit they have now lost, and are chiefly employed by the landlords in keeping their rents, in paying their revenue, and in remitting the surplus to such as reside at a distance, which is the case with the greater part. The money also, which is necessary for purchasing the exports, is chiefly sent to the district through these houses.
>
> "Bills are never discounted by these bankers, except by the house of Jogotseit, and even by that very rarely: but they occasionally lend money in advance to landholders, who are in arrear of revenue. They take one rupee per cent. a month as legal interest; but exact

as much more under the name of *munafa*, which is deducted from the principal at the time when it is advanced. Bills of a short date, granted by bankers on Múrshedabad, for cash paid at Dinajpúr, besides the stamp, cost from half to one per cent. and bills on Calcutta, from one to 1½ per cent. The capital of several of these houses is supposed to be very great, and their credit is considered as indubitable.

"The *potdars* or money-changers are a very numerous class, and many of them have no shop; but attend at markets, and sit with their *cowries* placed in heaps before them. Except indeed at Dinajpúr and a few other places, this is the universal practice. Their principal business is to exchange *cowries* and silver. Except in towns, it would be very difficult to obtain silver for gold, and could only be procured through the favor of private persons: none of the common money-changers having a capital of 16 rupees. Even in Dinajpúr, silver for 100 rupees worth of gold can only be procured from a principal bank or *Kut'hi*. A *potdar* goes in the morning to a market place, with a bag of *cowries* on his head, or if a very rich man, with a loaded ox, which if good may carry to the value of 15 rupees. All the early part of the market he sells cowries for silver to the people who wish to purchase goods, and in the evening the various huxters bring their *cowries*, and exchange them for silver. In the morning, the *potdar* usually gives 5760 *cowries*, or 72 *pon*, for a rupee, and in the evening he gives a rupee for 5920 *cowries*, or 74 *pon*, which is a profit of two *pon*, or $\frac{1}{36}$ part on every rupee that they exchange. This is on the supposition that the rupee is a new *Kaldár*, such as is now struck at the mint in Calcutta. All old rupees, and every kind of rupee but the *Kaldár*, pay various rates of exchange (*batta*), according to the will of the money-changers, who it is supposed always gain more by every kind of money than by the *Kaldár*. As *Kaldárs* are the only legal proffer of payment, their use has become very general, notwithstanding the efforts of the bankers and money-changers to the contrary, and the money-changers would therefore have suffered a loss, had they not fallen upon a plan of marking the *Kuldars* with a stamp, under pretext of ascertaining, whether they are true or false; after which, the rupee is not exchangeable, without paying an additional *batta*, that seems to be entirely arbitrary, and it becomes of course a circulating medium as valuable to the money-changer as if it were foreign coin. In order to render this more agreeable to the people, they pretend, that the marks will enable those who have received the rupees to have them changed, should any other dealer

refuse them as bad. The loss that is sustained by the public is very considerable, especially by the poor, who are so necessitous, that they submit to take any rupee, either in loan or payment, rather than suffer delay, and they always must pay the full *batta* or loss on exchange. If therefore a banker chooses to put a mark on the money, he should ever afterwards be compelled to change it at full value, and the use of false stamps should be considered as equally criminal with coining false money. In Dinajpúr, where the money-changers have capitals of perhaps 100 rupees, it is usual for them to advance *cowries* to all servants who have monthly wages, and at the end of the month, when the servants' wages are due, he repays them in silver ; for almost every man, if possible, anticipates his income. The money-changer gives these improvident persons 70 *pon* of *cowries* for the rupee, so that he has $\frac{4}{74}$ a month for his money ; but he very often loses the principal."

"Under the Great Mughals all rupees coined under the reigning King were considered as *siccas* and passed at their original value during his life. When a new king ascended the throne the rupees of the former reign became subject to a *batta* (discount) and were not received into the royal treasury. *Sicca rupees* were the only coins received in official payments. But there were mints at Dacca, Patna and Murshidabad. Individuals could procure the new *siccas* with facility, by sending their bullion or old coin to the mint or even disposing of them to shroffs in exchange for new *siccas* at current *batta*, which was seldom more than what was sufficient to indemnify the shroff for charges of the mint and to compensate him for his trouble." (N. K. Sinha—*Economic History of Bengal*, Vol. I, Ch. VII, page 118). Details about the currency circulating in the district of Dinājpur in the year 1787 may be had from the two letters of the Collector of Dinājpur that are reproduced below :

"I have received your Letter of the 12th of June accompanying Copy of the 22 Paragraph from the Hon'ble the Court of Directors and desiring I will transmit the information and Samples therein required Vizt Specimens of every Specie of Silver and Copper Coinage current in Bengal with a concise History of each particularly specifying where coined—by whom, Weight, fineness, real and nominal Value, quantity supposed to be coined annually and as far as ascertainable what quantity are supposed to be in circulation, and how far such quantities are proportioned to the general wants—

"The Rupees (of which samples now accompany) are the Currency of this District, and are denominated

Sonwaut,* Azeemabaddee or Patnye and French—The Sonwaut Rupee falls in its value and loses it's original Name of Sicca, after a certain Number of Years have elapsed and which the Title of Sonwaat implies—This rupee was of the Coinage of Moorshedabad.

"The Azeemabaddee or Patnye Rupee is of the same Weig [. .] and fineness with the Sicca but of less current Value ———— This Rupee bears upon the face of it the Title under which it circulates and is of the Coinage of Azeemabad, or Patna—

"The French Rupee is 2½ Rutty less in weight than the Sicca, or Azeemabaddee, but as far as I can judge is some what superior to them in fineness and is of foreign import—

"They all vary and lose alike in current value, from deficiency in Weight, & defect in shape, and appearance and alloy, in proportion to the degree of the deficiency, or the defect, or of both—The first point is ascertainable upon a fixed principle,—The latter is enveloped in Mystery and only to be revealed by the interposition of Shroffs, all of whom differ in the rate to be fixed for the loss upon the rupee according to the judgements they form upon it—and their Decision is arbitrary and final

"The annual Revenue received from the District is the only standard by which any conclusion with respect to the quantity of each Specie in circulation can be drawn. The proportion paid to the Zemindar as Revenue is nearly 2/3[as] Sunwaut and of the remaining 1/3[d], 3/4[th] French & 1/4 Azeemabaddee in forming of a more accurate Judgement of the actual quantity of the three species in circulation throughout the District Allowance must be made for the exchange of Shroffage carried on in the Mufosil—The Quantities in circulation of each specie, are apparently proportioned to answer every emergency,—"

"I now reply to your circular Letter dated the 12[th] of October last desiring I will transmit an account of the different species of Rupees circulating throughout the District with the usual Bazar rates of Batta upon each specifying the variations &c[a]—

"In this District the currency is Sicca, Sonaut or Foolee

* "The Jagat Seths were responsible for the development of the custom according to which a new coined *sicca* rupee circulated at full *batta* for twelve months, then fell three per cent and had the denomination of *hirsauns* or *siccas* of various years. At the end of the second year they fell again by two per cent under denomination of *sonaut*. At this stage they remained until they were recoined into *siccas*." (N. K. Sinha—*Economic History of Bengal*, Vol. I, Chapter VII.)

Patnye and French Arcot* Rupees and the rate of Batta upon each specie perpetually fluctuating the cause of the variations of the different Rate originates from the quantity of each specie brought into circulation—If the Demand by Merchants Golhdars and others for the Produce of the District be great, and sudden, and the Demand for Revenue inconsiderable, the rates of Batta fall—The usual rate of Batta upon these specie being current cannot accurately be ascertained, it is regulated in proportion to the Demand or otherwise for each particular Specie, and which in a great degree depends upon the quantity in circulation of each—but rating the Sicca Rupees as the Standard, for fixing the Bazar rate of Batta the average difference upon the five Specie current, may be stated at between fourteen and fifteen Gundas in the Rupee.

"The relative proportions of the different Species in circulation throughout the Year from the verbal information of shroffs, and Merchants from whom I have made enquiries, may be rated as follows, about three parts in four Foolee or Sonnaut Rupees, and of the remaining one fourth ¾th French Arcots ⅛th Patnye and ⅛th Sicca.

"In commercial Transactions the purchase of the Articles of Produce of this District, Grain, Silk, Cloth and Jaygree, is chiefly made in Foolee Sonnauts, and French Arcots and the Revenue is paid in the five different specie

"The circulation and Currency of these several species, subjects the Riaut and the Renter to some inconvenience, in as much. as that the rate of Batta upon each is arbitrary, and varies almost in every Village, but the benefit by this fluctuation in the rates of Batta is in favor of the commercial Body, who introduce these different sorts of Rupees in their Mercantile Transactions.—

"It does not appear that there is any want of Specie in the District, but it might be very desirable to introduce a general Sicca Currency as that is the standard for the Revenue Receipts.—"

Present day.

Private bankers and moneylenders and big businessmen undoubtedly operate even in the present day, but the important point that is to be noticed is that they no longer act as bankers to the State.

* "The Arcot rupees were originally struck by the Nawab of Arcot but the English, the French and the Dutch also secured the privilege of coining in Madras, Pondicherry and Negapatam and English, French and Dutch Arcots also poured into Bengal." (*Ibid.*)

(b) INDEBTEDNESS

Findings in the Settlement Report, 1934-1940

The subject of indebtedness and credit has been discussed in the Final Report on the Survey and Settlement Operations in the District of Dinājpur, 1934-1940. Mr. F. O. Bell, the Settlement Officer, remarked as follows:

"*The problem of debt and credit.*—Besides making the record of rights, the officers of this department spent much time in various enquiries into the economic facts of the countryside, and one special line of enquiry was the extent, and reason for debt. The results obtained are perhaps not particularly accurate with respect to detailed figures of amount of debt, but are convincing as regards certain broad tendencies. The facts established are: (1) that debt is most acute among the moderate sized cultivators; less common among the big cultivators, who are more often money lenders; and rarest among the poorest people, the adhiars and labourers with little or no permanent rights in land; (2) as a corollary, debt varies with credit, up to the point where borrowing is unnecessary to maintain the required standard of living; (3) that most borrowing was done before the break in prices, in 1931, or at the beginning of the slump; and (4) that the money lenders are pre-eminently the richer cultivators or jotedars. A number of tables have been prepared to illustrate these points. The facts ascertained depend upon the statements of the debtors themselves, and the gross amount of debt has been found by calculating the amount due, from the sum borrowed as stated by the debtor, and the interest as stated by him. This gives artificial results, for it is certain that lenders never expected to obtain payment of interest and principal, at the stipulated rates, which are most commonly 24 per cent. and 25 per cent. or 37½ per cent. per annum. Even before the passage of the Bengal Agricultural Debtors' Act, there had been a partial moratorium in the countryside. Just about half the population is indebted, though owing to the greater prevalence of debt among the larger families, the proportion of individuals among indebted families is rather higher than the proportion of indebted families to total families under investigation. Marriage is evidently the cause of the largest amount of borrowing, as it occupies a high place in the list every year. Among cultivators, both Muslim and Rajbangshi, the marriage of a son occasions much more expenditure than the marriage of a daughter, and it seems to be entirely 'luxury' expenditure, in the sense that money spent on marriage goes not in a dowry, or 'setting up home', but in entertaining neighbours with feasting and fireworks. Much of such

expenditure literally 'goes up in smoke'. But there are signs that the country folk themselves realize that such expenditure is creating an impossible situation, and that caste panchayats are fixing a lower limit for marriage expenditure. The marriage of a son of a moderate sized Rajbangshi cultivator, which might have cost Rs. 100, six or seven years ago, would now be celebrated for Rs. 25. Purchase of cattle occupies a high place every year in the amount of debt incurred. As it is essential for the cultivator to have cattle, the attention of the Co-operative Department might well be directed to financing cattle purchase, or in developing a cattle insurance scheme. The difficulties of the latter are of course immense. The other great cause of indebtedness is classed widely as 'Food, or domestic purposes'. It is difficult to understand why people should borrow large sums of money for carrying on in hard times, and certainly some part of this borrowing is in hard cash. Perhaps the explanation is that some families have set themselves a certain standard of living, and when for any reason, they are short or incur unusual expenditure and have to borrow to keep up the standard, they told the enquiring officer that the borrowing was for food or domestic purposes. In 'D' block,* in 1938, however, a large part of the borrowing under this head was certainly done by means of paddy loans, on a fairly small scale, and is genuine borrowing to keep going over the difficult days before the harvest. This is genuine 'rural credit'. In all years there has been a fair sprinkling of debt incurred for business or trade, by big villagers who have gone in for paddy, oil, or cloth trading, and have somehow become involved. This indebtedness though heavy in the aggregate is confined to a small number of individuals. In 'B' block,† there had been heavy borrowing by a number of individuals, to buy land.

"In 'D' block in 1937-38 (Bengali year 1344), some special enquiries were made into the operation of the 'derhi' system, by which so many of the poorer cultivators, adhiars and labourers are helped over the difficult period of the year. By this time the Debt Settlement Boards had been well established, and the cry had been raised that 'credit had dried up'. It was hoped that the enquiries would find out whether credit essential for the poorer cultivators had, in fact, been stopped. The enquiries were made in 15 villages distributed in five thanas of the west of the district. It was

* 'D' block consisted of the police stations Rāiganj, Hemtābād, Kāliāganj, Itāhār, Biral, Kushmandi and Bangshihāri.

† 'B' block consisted of the whole of Thākurgāon sub-division less Khānsāmā police station.

found that 156 families had taken 'derhi' loans in grain, out of a total of 504 families, so some 30 per cent. of the families obtained assistance in this way. Adhiars figured largely among the borrowers, and 42 per cent. of the indebted families held more land in adhi than in tenancy right. In all, 29 per cent. of the indebted families held less than an acre in tenancy right. These 156 families borrowed 825 maunds odd of paddy in the year 1937 (Bengali year 1344) stipulating to repay 1,280 maunds. Actually 668 maunds had been repaid when further enquiries were made in the spring of 1938, and the amount might have been more if the repayment enquiries in one thana had not been made as early as January. A small amount was borrowed as early as Baisakh 1344, but the month of greatest borrowing was Asharh, after which borrowing gradually declined. Magh and Phalgun were the months generally stipulated for repayment. The 156 families were indebted to 99 different creditors, of whom all except three, were described as jotedars or cultivators. In view of the statements often made that lending in 'derhi' is being confined to jotedars and their own adhiars, the officers were asked to note if the lender was in fact the jotedar of his adhiar debtor. This was found to be so as regards only one quarter of the creditors. The results of this enquiry suggest that 'rural credit' has certainly not dried up. Almost a third of the families in these fifteen villages are found to be borrowing grain in 1344. The reason why richer cultivators are ready to lend is that the sums taken are reasonably small, averaging between 5 and 6 maunds an indebted family, and well within the paying capacity of the borrower. As the name implies, the normal stipulation is that 1½ maunds should be repaid for every maund borrowed, but sometimes 1¼ is to be repaid; and very occasionally double is demanded. These rural lenders do not seem very rapacious, for considerable sums are allowed to run from one year to another. Repayments within the year varied greatly in different villages. Probably there is a certain element of charity in these grain loans. They are taken primarily not to pay for agricultural operations, but to provide subsistence for the borrower, who without the grain might have to go hungry. There is elasticity about repayment, and the system may be regarded not so much as 'rural credit' but as a form of poor relief by loan. Lending of big cash loans for marriage would, however seem to have declined greatly. The sums formerly borrowed would be beyond the borrowers' capacity to pay in view of present prices of agricultural produce, and quite apart from Debt Settle-

ment Boards, it is doubtful if Mahajans have got the money to lend.

"*Mahajans and transfer of lands from agriculturists.*—One fact which seems incontrovertible about rural indebtedness, is the great number of people who are revealed to be lenders or 'mahajans'. There may be instances of one spider having enticed all the residents of a village into his web, but such are not usual. More often a rich cultivator or jotedar will have lent money to two or three neighbours who need cash for sudden unusual expenditure such as a marriage, or for buying cattle; or again he may have advanced grain to the poor men of the village. The conception of a village 'bania', foreign to the cultivator in caste and tradition, and sucking the blood of a depressed peasantry does not fit the conditions of Dinajpur. If there is any blood-sucking, it is done by the richer cultivators themselves. People of non-agricultural tradition are few in the Dinajpur countryside. The Muslim jotedars are all peasants and agriculturists, and if a non-agriculturist lends money it is usually within 2 or 3 miles of his residence. Following up the Report of the Linlithgow Commission, the department was required to obtain figures of the extent of transfer of lands from agriculturists to non-agriculturists. The results are given at the end of this chapter.* Completeness cannot be claimed for them for it was easy to omit a transfer, or to forget to make the entry, but the figures probably indicate general trends. It is far from easy to distinguish between an agriculturist and a non-agriculturist. Instructions were issued that a man who obtained the major portion of his income from his khas lands, including lands cultivated by adhiars, at the time of the transfer, should be counted as an agriculturist. This definition made the big jotedars of agricultural stock,—the Muslims, Rajbangshis and Mahisyas—agriculturists, and they were not included in the transfer list. On this definition, the Porsha Chaudhuries were counted as agriculturists and lands bought up by them were not included in the list. Their neighbours, the Bhakats of Nithpur, were, however, counted as non-agriculturists. More difficult was the descendant of a landlord's agent, a village doctor, or a Government servant, who had settled in the village and acquired domicile. If a daroga's cousin-brother bought up land, it was easy to say that he was a non-agriculturist, but if the family had been resident many years for a generation or two, it was not easy to discover whether the land was really transferred or old ancestral property. Probably the

* The results are not reproduced in this book.

present owner, though of a non-agricultural caste, was now solely dependent on the income from this land, which he cultivated through adhiars. Land transferred meant the raiyati right in land. Subject to this comment, the figures are given for what they are worth. Transfer to non-agriculturists seems to have increased of recent years, since the fall in prices; but transfers are more easily detected when made in recent years; and the amount transferred more than 12 years ago is always considerably larger than that transferred recently. Acquisition of lands by non-agriculturists is no new thing; but has not gone very far, and is confined to villages within easy distance of the purchaser's residence. The greater part is transferred by private sale, though it would probably be found that most such sales were made because the vendor was in debt, and chose to sell amicably, rather than be forced into Court. There can be no doubt but that cultivation by 'adhi' is the most popular method of dealing with these lands."

(c) RURAL CREDIT FACILITIES

Co-operative credit.

Credit to agriculturists is provided mainly by private money-lenders and co-operative banks. The extent of credit provided by private money-lenders cannot be ascertained, but it is probably not insignificant. There are two central co-operative banks in the district, one of which is the Balurghat Central Co-operative Bank Ltd., and the other the Raiganj Central Co-operative Bank Ltd. The Balurghat Central Co-operative Bank was established in 1915 with both preference and ordinary shareholders. It functioned quite successfully since its inception till 1947, when, consequent on the partition of the district, as many as 335 primary co-operative societies were cut off from the Bank. It has, however, been re-organised in 1957-58. The number of its members in 1957-58 was 730. In 1958-59 this number increased to 743. In 1959-60 it was 752. Of these 752 members, 56 were individuals and the rest were primary societies. The working capital increased from Rs. 13.53 lakhs in 1957-58 to Rs. 18.02 lakhs in 1959-60. In 1957-58 Rs. 6.77 lakhs were distributed by way of loans. This figure increased to Rs. 13.76 lakhs in 1959-60. The amount of overdue loans was reduced from 80 per cent in 1957-58 to 18.1 per cent in 1959-60. The Raiganj Central Co-operative Bank Ltd. was organised in 1947 after Partition. The Rāiganj sub-division had formerly been within the area of operation of the Dinajpur Central Co-operative Bank Ltd. which is now in Pakistan. The area of operation of the Raiganj Central Co-operative Bank extends over the entire

Rāiganj and Islāmpur sub-divisions. The number of its members increased from 420 in 1957-58 to 475 in 1959-60. All the members are primary societies affiliated to the Bank. The following table represents the condition of the Bank in the years 1957-58, 1958-59 and 1959-60:

	1957-58	1958 59	1959-60
1. No. of members	420	443	475
2. Working capital	Rs. 11.28 lakhs	Rs. 10.65 lakhs	Rs. 9.70 lakhs
3. Loans issued	Rs. 5.48 „	Rs. 4.71 „	Rs. 4.89 „
4. Overdues	Rs. 7.55 „	Rs. 2.25 „	Rs. 4.02 „
5. Collection of bills	Rs. 2.23 „	Rs. 3.29 „	Rs. 5.10 „
6. Net profit	Rs. 144	Rs. 33,480	Rs. 4,227

The other source of credit available to agriculturists is the Balurghat Co-operative Land Mortgage Bank Ltd. The table below shows its condition in the years 1957-58, 1958-59 and 1959-60:

	1957-58	1958-59	1959-60
1. No. of members	176	204	243
2. Share capital	Rs. 7,480	Rs. 8,920	Rs. 10,510
3. Working capital	Rs. 104,497	Rs. 118,795	Rs. 163,181
4. Loans issued	Rs. 33,825	Rs. 25,675	Rs. 41,785
5. Overdues	Rs. 6,370	Rs. 5,820	Rs. 9,350
6. Net loss	Rs. 5,844	Rs. 6,363	Rs. 6,094

It would be seen that the Balurghat Central Co-operative Bank, the Raiganj Central Co-operative Bank and the Balurghat Co-operative Land Mortgage Bank among them disbursed a total amount of Rs. 1,906.785 by way of loans in 1959-60. The Collector disbursed Rs. 450,000 by way of agricultural loans and Rs. 100,000 by way of Cattle purchase loans in the same year. So, the total credit available to the agriculturists from these sources in 1959-60 amounted to Rs. 2,456,785. It may be mentioned here that the loans issued by co-operative societies and the Collector are short-term loans.

(d) LIFE INSURANCE AND NATIONAL SAVINGS

Life Insurance.

In 1957, 2,061 persons took out life insurance policies of the total value of Rs. 45.19 lakhs. The number of persons who got themselves insured increased to 2,287 in 1958, 2,584 in 1959 and 2,685 in 1960. The total sum assured in 1958 was Rs. 49.86 lakhs; in 1959 it was Rs. 56.63 lakhs and in 1960 Rs. 72.92 lakhs. The average value of a policy was Rs. 2,192 in 1957, Rs. 2,180 in 1958, Rs. 2,191 in 1959 and Rs. 2,715 in 1960. As the minimum amount for which a life insurance policy can be taken out is Rs. 1,000, it is easy to see that the majority of persons who insure their lives hail from middle and lower middle classes.

National Savings Schemes.

In the sphere of National Savings Schemes, the savings effected in the district during the years 1958-59, 1959-60 and 1960-61 through sale of various Savings Certificates and Post Office Savings Bank deposits are given below:

Year	Amount of savings (in thousands of rupees)
1958-59	5.44
1959-60	7.33
1960-61	35.87

B. TRADE AND COMMERCE

(a) COURSE OF TRADE: IMPORTS AND EXPORTS: CREDIT FACILITIES

The district being mainly agricultural, imports and exports are confined mostly to agricultural commodities. West Dinājpur is an important exporter of rice. The quantity of rice exported varies from year to year according to the surplus available for the export market; the figure eight to ten lakh maunds (about thirty to thirty-seven thousand t) represents a reasonably approximate average of the quantity of rice exported from the district annually. The value of the quantity exported would be in the neighbourhood of two crores of rupees (Rs. 20,000,000). Exports of rice are usually made to Siliguri, Jalpāiguri, Ālipurduār, Cooch Behār, Māldā and Calcutta. About fifteen lakh maunds (about fifty-six thousand t) of jute and *mestā* valued at three crores of rupees (Rs. 30,000,000) are also exported to Calcutta every year. In addition thirty-five thousand maunds (about thirteen hundred t) of dried chillies valued at thirty-

five lakhs of rupees (Rs. 3,500,000), forty thousand maunds (about fifteen hundred t) of onions valued at forty lakhs of rupees (Rs. 4,000,000), twenty thousand maunds (about seven hundred and fifty t) of *gur* or molasses prepared from sugarcane valued at three lakhs of rupees (Rs. 300,000), and one hundred and six maunds (about four t) of tobacco valued at six lakhs of rupees (Rs. 600,000) are exported out of the district annually. Twenty thousand pieces of raw hides and skins valued at one lakh and fifty thousands of rupees (Rs. 150,000) are also exported every year. Dried chillies are usually sent to Calcutta, Assam and Bihar, onions mainly to Assam, *kalāi* to the Punjab, *gur* or molasses to Calcutta, Siliguri and other places, tobacco to Calcutta, Siliguri and a few other places, and raw hides and skins to Calcutta and Madras. The total value of the exports is in the neighbourhood of six crores of rupees (Rs. 60,000,000). As against this, thirty-five thousand maunds (about thirteen hundred t) of split pulses valued at Rupees seven lakhs (Rs. 700,000), fifteen thousand maunds (about five hundred and sixty t) of mustard oil valued at Rupees eleven lakhs (Rs. 1,100,000), ten thousand maunds (three hundred and seventy-three t) of mustard seed cake valued at Rupees one lakh (Rs. 100,000) and seventy-five thousand maunds (about twenty-eight hundred t) of sugar valued at twenty-eight lakhs of rupees (Rs. 2,800,000) are imported into the district to meet the internal demand. These commodities are usually imported from Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Calcutta. The import pattern shows that the district is deficit in the production of pulses, mustard oil, mustard cake and sugar. The net earning of the district on account of the export and import of commodities is of the order of about five crores and forty lakhs of rupees (Rs. 54,000,000) per year. If twenty-five per cent of this amount is deducted as the share of the exporters and the middlemen who operate between the producers and the exporters, then the annual income from agricultural produce alone for the people of the district can be put down at four crores and five lakhs of rupees (Rs. 40,500,000). This would mean a *per capita* income of about Rs. 30.60 nP per year from the export and import of agricultural produce. In the foregoing calculations, the value of textiles, petrol and other similar consumer goods has not been taken into account thereby making the result only approximate.

The trade in rice and paddy is handled mainly by the rice mills of which there are twenty-nine in the district. There used to be five more but these recently went out of existence. Some proportion of the total quantity of rice and paddy exported from the district is handled by small operators.

The role of middlemen.

The trade in rice and other commodities is usually carried on by a host of middlemen. Some of these middlemen purchase the surplus stock of villagers in the villages and sell

their purchases at the *hāts* or markets in the district to bigger operators. Some of these bigger operators either themselves export the commodities, or sell it in their turn to big financiers who arrange exports in bulk. For ensuring regular supply of the commodities it is not uncommon on the part of businessmen to advance money against standing green crops, but the amount so advanced is not known with any degree of accuracy. Under the *swari* and *dara* systems in vogue in the district, a grower is advanced a maund of paddy under contract of returning 1¼ or 1½ times at the time of the harvest on demand by the creditor.

Godowns.

There are 516 godowns at ten of the important markets of the district. These godowns are privately owned. There are 125 such godowns at Bālurghāt, 100 at Hili, 60 at Gangārāmpur, 75 at Rāiganj, 62 at Kāliāganj, 4 at Dhānkail *hāt*, 10 at Islāmpur, 75 at Dālkholā, 2 at Panjipārā and 3 at Kanki. Commodities meant for export and commodities imported into the district are initially stored in these godowns before being sent to different places outside or in the district, as the case may be.

Finance for trade.

The important point to note in this connection is that commodities valued at nearly six and a half crores of rupees (Rs. 65,000,000) have to be imported into and exported from the district in a year. The number of banks in the district is very small. There are two branches of the State Bank of India, one at Bālurghāt and the other at Rāiganj. There is also a branch of the Central Bank of India at Rāiganj. Among banks situated outside the district but which play significant roles in financing trade and commerce within it, mention may be made of the branch of the United Bank of India Ltd. at Māldā and the branch of the Central Bank of India at Kātihār. It appears that in 1960-61 average advances amounted to only Rs. 135,000 from the Balurghat Branch of the State Bank of India. The average amount advanced by the branch of the Central Bank of India at Rāiganj is not known. The Raiganj Branch of the State Bank of India advanced Rs. 386,000 in 1960 for trading purposes. The average amount of credit available to the businessmen from the State Bank of India may, therefore, be taken to be approximately five lakhs and twenty thousands of rupees (Rs. 520,000) in the year 1960-61. The average amount of credit available to the traders from the banks does not, however, lead to an accurate estimate of the volume of credit actually available, because the same amount of money may circulate many times. It is accordingly not possible to assess with any degree of accuracy how far the banks succeed in meeting the demand for credit in the district for the financing of trade and commerce, and it would be unwise in the circumstances to rule out entirely the possibility of private sources playing a not insignificant part in banking operations in the district, in the restricted sense of lending money.

(b) TRADE CENTRES

Centres of wholesale business.

The number of established markets or *hāts* in the district is quite considerable, being 32 in number. These are:

1. Bālurghāt *hāt*
2. Gangārāmpur *hāt*
3. Hili *hāt*
4. Daral *hāt*
5. Bhikāhār *hāt*
6. Bollā *hāt*
7. Kāmārpārā *hāt*
8. Mohonā *hāt*
9. Dāngā *hāt*
10. Matherganj *hāt*
11. Patirām *hāt*
12. Nayābāzār *hāt*
13. Mahārājāhāt
14. Dhānkail *hāt*
15. Kamalābāri *hāt*
16. Durgāpur *hāt*
17. Sarāi *hāt*
18. Patirāj *hāt*
19. Harirāmpur *hāt*
20. Kunārhāt
21. Islāmpur *hāt*
22. Dālkholā *hāt*
23. Panjipārā *hāt*
24. Choprā *hāt*
25. Sonāpur *hāt*
26. Rāiganj market
27. Kāliāganj market
28. Bishnupur *hāt*
29. Madhuban *hāt*
30. Dasalaksha *hāt*
31. Raurganj *hāt*
32. Palāspur *hāt*

These *hāts* and markets are predominantly wholesale, but retail trade also is carried on *pari passu*.

Retail marketing centres.

Only retail trade is carried on in about 174 *hāts* located throughout the district. The number of retail markets which are attended by one thousand persons and more is 40, while the number of retail markets which are attended by between five hundred and one thousand persons is 58. The rest are small markets attended by less than five hundred persons. The names of the retail markets showing the principal agricultural commodities bought and sold and the days on which transactions are carried on are given in the statement on the next two pages in respect of those markets where the attendance is one thousand and above. On the whole the needs of the people are fairly well served by these wholesale and retail markets.

Sl. No.	Name of the *hāts*/markets	Year when started	Days on which the markets sit	Police Station	Principal agricultural commodities dealt in
1.	Kushmandi *hāt*	1852	Monday, Thursday, Saturday	Kushmandi	Paddy, rice, potato, chillies, onion, *gur*, tobacco, milk.
2.	Kātābāri *hāt*	1952	Sunday, Thursday	"	Jute, paddy, rice, vegetables, cattle, goat, *gur*, mustard.
3.	Sehal *hāt*	1952	Tuesday, Saturday	Bangshihāri	Paddy, rice, vegetables, potato, mustard oil and cake.
4.	Bollā *hāt*	—	Friday	Bālurghāt	Rice, paddy, mustard cake, betel leaves, etc.
5.	Syampur	1927	Tuesday	Rāiganj	Jute, paddy, rice, *gur*, vegetables.
6.	Jhitkiā *hāt*	1910	Monday	"	Jute, paddy, rice, mustard, potato, *gur*, bamboo.
7.	Bangshihāri *hāt*	1752	Tuesday	Bangshihāri	Paddy, rice.
8.	Futāniganj *hāt*	1933	Thursday	Bālurghāt	Paddy, rice; jute, *gur*.
9.	Baul *hāt*	1939	Monday	"	Paddy, mustard cake, pulses, bamboo.
10.	Jalghar *hāt*	1947	Friday, Monday	"	Paddy, rice.
11.	Madanganj *hāt*	1881	Sunday, Wednesday	"	Paddy, rice.
12.	Barakāshipur *hāt*	1918	Thursday	"	Paddy, rice.
13.	Nazirpur *hāt*	1912	Sunday	"	Paddy, rice, vegetables.
14.	Patirām *hāt*	1872	Tuesday, Saturday	"	Rice, vegetables.
15.	Pāgliganj *hāt*	1950	Tuesday, Friday	"	Paddy, rice, potato, mustard.
16.	Thākurpārā *hāt*	1802	Monday, Friday	"	Paddy, jute.
17.	Gopālbāti *hāt*	1952	Thursday	"	Paddy, rice.
18.	Mālanchā *hāt*	1950	Tuesday, Friday	"	Paddy, rice.
19.	Āmrāil *hāt*	1843	Tuesday, Saturday	"	Paddy, rice, jute.
20.	Bāmanhāti *hāt*	1948	Thursday	"	Paddy, rice, jute.

Sl. No.	Name of the *hāts*/markets	Year when started	Days on which the markets sit	Police Station	Principal agricultural commodities dealt in
21.	Chingispur *hāt*	1840	Monday, Friday	Bālurghāt	Paddy, rice, jute, mustard, pulses.
22.	Bishral *hāt*	1850	Saturday	Gangārāmpur	Paddy, rice, vegetables, chillies, cattle.
23.	Sarbamangalā *hāt*	1932	Wednesday	"	Paddy, rice, jute, potato.
24.	Champātali *hāt*	1952	Tuesday, Saturday	"	Paddy, rice, jute.
25.	Bābtail	1850	Wednesday	Tapan	Vegetables, *gur*.
26.	Tior *hāt*	1892	Saturday, Wednesday	Hili	Paddy, rice, jute, mustard, potato.
27.	Chāndganj *hāt*	1872	Saturday, Tuesday	Kumārganj	Paddy, rice, jute, mustard, chillies, cattle.
28.	Samjiā *hāt*	1882	Sunday, Wednesday	"	Paddy, rice, jute, potatoes.
29.	Gopālganj *hāt*	1852	Sunday, Wednesday	"	Paddy, rice, jute, mustard
30.	Panthora	1882	Saturday, Tuesday	"	Paddy, rice.
31.	Kanki *hāt*	1917	Sunday, Tuesday	Karandighi	Paddy, jute, rice, vegetables.
32.	Samaspur *hāt*	1900	Saturday	Hemtābād	Jute, mustard, paddy, rice, cattle, vegetables.
33.	Rabur *hāt*	1832	Thursday	Kushmandi	Paddy, chillies, rice, onion, *gur*, vegetables.
34.	Bindol *hāt*	1880	Saturday	Rāiganj	Paddy, rice, jute, mustard, *gur*, etc.
35.	Rāiganj *hāt*	1852	Sunday, Thursday	"	Rice, jute, paddy, vegetables, cattle, etc.
36	Daulatpur *hāt*	1903	Monday	Bangshihāri	Paddy, rice, chillies, onion, vegetables, etc.
37.	Bhātole *hāt*	1942	Tuesday, Friday	Rāiganj	Paddy, rice, jute, mustard, vegetables.
38.	Buridighi	1887	Friday	Gangārāmpur	Paddy, rice, jute.
39.	Saidpur *hāt*	1946	Wednesday, Saturday	Kumārganj	Rice, vegetables.
40.	Chakalia *hāt*	1907	Wednesday, Saturday	Goālpokhar	Jute, paddy, vegetables.

Fairs or melas.

Fairs or *melas* are held at 26 places in the district. Apart from the social excitement they provide, the main purpose of these fairs or *melas* is to make available to the people of the district those goods which are not available in the locality. The term goods in this context should be taken to include livestock. The period during which these *melas* are held usually coincides with some religious festival or other, but the economic aspect always predominates. Thus, although the *melas* at Islāmpur or at Dhaldighi are ostensibly held to commemorate the memory of some local saints, yet religious activities are not much in evidence. The major part of the trade carried on in these *melas* at Dhaldighi, Islāmpur or Patirām is confined to transactions in livestock. Most of these livestock are of qualities superior to those obtainable in the district and the cultivators acquire animals of superior breeds at these *melas* for improving their own stock. Camels are also brought for sale to these *melas* for a very peculiar purpose. The Muslim population of this district set great store on the sacrifice of camels in their religious ceremonies, and these camels are mainly purchased for the purpose of sacrifice. The other articles brought for sale at these *melas* include buckets made of galvanized iron sheets, aluminium cooking utensils, other household articles, dolls and other toys, clothes and readymade garments. A few tailors also open their shops temporarily and carry on a brisk trade in making garments. A list of these *melas* showing their locations and duration is given below:

Sl. No.	Name of fairs	Police Station	Duration
1.	Dhānkail *mela*	Kāliāganj	15 days
2.	Godal *mela*	Bangshihāri	10 days
3.	Berail Dhokarsahid *mela*	Kushmandi	25 days
4.	Nazirpur *mela*	Bālurghāt	10 days
5.	Patirām *mela*	,,	15 days
6.	Bindol *mela*	Rāiganj	15 days
7.	Bollā Kāli *mela*	Bālurghāt	4 days
8.	Hāsuā Swāmināth *mela*	Itāhār	3 days
9.	Daral *mela*	Tapan	7 days
10.	Islāmpur *mela*	Islāmpur	2 months
11.	Madarganj *mela*	Kumārganj	10 days
12.	Karandighi *mela*	Karandighi	7 days
13.	Dhaldighi *mela*	Gangārāmpur	42 days
14.	Patrangi Pir *mela*	Itāhār	4 days
15.	Patirājpur *mela*	,,	20 days
16.	Trikul *mela*	Bālurghāt	3 days
17.	Dhādalpārā *mela*	Kumārganj	1 day
18.	Batun *mela*	,,	2 days
19.	Chanchara Kāli *mela*	Bālurghāt	2 days
20.	Kāmārpārā *mela*	,,	6 days
21.	Kusumbā *mela*	Bangshihāri	3 days
22.	Dāudpur *mela*	Kumārganj	2 days
23.	Basoir *mela*	Tapan	3 days
24.	Arjunpur *mela*	,,	5 days
25.	Dwipnagar *mela*	Rāiganj	2 days
26.	Mahārājāhāt *mela*	,,	2 days

The organisers of these *melas* derive considerable income from the rents from stalls and commissions on transactions. Adequate public health measures have to be taken by the district authorities for preventing the outbreak of any epidemic disease in the *melas*.

(c) CO-OPERATION IN TRADE

Co-operative agricultural marketing.

There are 17 co-operative agricultural marketing societies of which 7 are large-size marketing societies. Out of these 7, only 2 are functioning properly. The Raiganj Co-operative Marketing Society had 282 members and a share capital of Rs. 20,705 (of which the Government had contributed Rs. 10,000) in 1959-60. The Barahar Samabay Bikray Samiti Ltd. had 162 members with a share capital of Rs. 20,750 (of which the Government contributed Rs. 10,030). Annual turnover of the former society was Rs. 102,896 while that of the latter was Rs. 55,800. The membership of these societies is open to the agriculturists, traders and smaller co-operative societies, but at present they are dominated mostly by big farmers. So far as the small-size co-operative marketing societies are concerned, they are still in the formative stage and no effective role is played by them in the marketing of agricultural produce. The co-operative marketing societies have been established as the cultivators' own organisation through which to dispose of their products to their best advantage. The societies afford the cultivators credit against deposits of grain, the advances being adjusted after the disposal of the grain at the most favourable market rate for the season. But this latter objective has not been achieved to the full so far as the co-operative marketing societies are concerned, as adequate working capital and storage facilities are lacking, and as most grower-members prefer full cash payment for their grain then and there.

Multipurpose co-operative societies.

The multipurpose co-operative societies, on the other hand, are free to engage in a number of activities. There are 19 multipurpose co-operative societies in the district of which the Kaliaganj Co-operative Multipurpose Society Ltd. is worth mentioning. It has got a fairly good sized storage godown attached to its office room. It carries on business in cloth, coal and transport. In 1959-60 it also took up the manufacture of bricks. It ran at a profit during the years 1958-59 and 1959-60.

Consumers' co-operative societies.

Co-operation is also being practised in the supply of consumer goods. There are 11 consumers' co-operative societies with a total membership of 4,473. The condition of 8 of these societies is not very happy. 3 notable consumers' co-operative societies are the Jahangirpur Co-operative Stores Ltd.,

Kaliaganj Co-operative Stores Ltd. and Hili Co-operative Stores Ltd.

On the whole, the part played by co-operation in trade and commerce is insignificant.

(d) STATE WAREHOUSES

The West Bengal State Warehousing Corporation recently opened three warehouses in West Dinājpur, at Islāmpur, Bālurghāt and Kāliāganj with two sub-centres—one at Rāiganj and the other at Durgāpur. These warehouses have been set up with the objective of ensuring scientific preservation of food grains and providing credit facilities to the depositors against hypothecation of their produce. Buildings have not yet been constructed by the Corporation at these places and business is carried on in hired premises. Growers as well as traders can store agricultural commodities in these godowns on payment of specified charges, which vary from commodity to commodity.

There is arrangement with the banks for advancing money against the commodities stored in the warehouses. Moreover, fertilizers are also sold to the agriculturists from these warehouses.

(e) MERCHANTS' ASSOCIATIONS

There is an association of merchants in the district, viz., the West Dinajpur Rice Mills' Association. It was established in the year 1948. Almost all the rice mills in the district are members of this association. The association looks towards the interests of its member rice mills. Its activities consist mainly in securing wagons from the Railways for export of rice. There are also other merchants' associations in the district, mainly looking to the interests of the jute trade; there is one such association at Kāliāganj and another at Dālkholā.

(f) WEIGHTS AND MEASURES

Various kinds of weights and measures were used in different parts of the district for measuring a particular commodity. Again, different measures were used for measuring different commodities. Thus, for weighing jute, two types of seers, one of eighty *tolas* and the other of one hundred and twenty *tolas* were used at Mahārājāhāt in the Rāiganj subdivision, while a seer of one hundred and five *tolas* were used at Dumdumā *hāt* and seers of eighty and one hundred and twenty-eight *tolas* in Dhānkail *hāt* in the Rāiganj sub-

division. For mustard oil, two types of weights were used, one the seer of sixty *tolas* at Mahārājāhāt and the other of eighty *tolas* at Dhānkail *hāt*. The seer for weighing tobacco was sixty *tolas* at Dhānkail *hāt*, while for measuring rice two kinds of seers, one containing ninety-six *tolas* and the other containing sixty *tolas* were used at Dumdumā *hāt*, Daral *hāt* and the Kumārganj *hāt*. A seer of one hundred and twenty *tolas* was used for measuring rice at Dumdumā *hāt* and at Daral *hāt*. All these different weights have been replaced by the metric system of weights based on the gramme.

CHAPTER VII

COMMUNICATIONS

(a) OLD TIME TRADE ROUTES AND HIGHWAYS

Sultān Ghiyās-ud-din is said to have built a road connecting Devkoṭ in Gangārāmpur police station with Lakhnor or Nagar in Birbhum district. There were, of course, no bridges on the big rivers which used to be crossed with the help of ferries. Another road was also built by some Sultān, possibly Husain Shāh, between Devkoṭ and Ghorāghāt via Hili. The undivided district of Dinājpur had quite a number of roads even from ancient times. Major Rennell's map shows the existence of a number of roads leading from Dinājpur town, but many of those roads disappeared by the end of the nineteenth century. In the first decade of the twentieth century there were a number of roads in the undivided district of Dinājpur. But it would not be worthwhile to waste space in describing them because all these roads were either to or from the town of Dinājpur which is now in Pakistan. It would, therefore, be more realistic to begin the account of the roads of the district from the year 1947 in which year the district of West Dinājpur came into existence.

(b) ROAD TRANSPORT, RAIL-ROADS AND TRANSPORT BY AIR

Road communication in 1947.

It appears from the report of the Collector of West Dinājpur that communication by road at that time was in an extremely deplorable state. The important villages and police stations were connected only by *kutcha* roads which could be negotiated in fair weather, and almost all the rivers and canals were unbridged. There was only one tar-mac road in the district, seventeen miles in length between Hili and Bālurghāt. Rāiganj was connected with Bālurghāt by *kutcha* road. The road to Rāiganj used to pass through Buniādpur and Kāliāganj. The sub-division of Islāmpur was added to the district only in 1956. In 1947 the condition of road communication of that part also was not very different from that obtaining in other parts of the district. There was the road from Rāiganj to the district of Purneā and there was also the road to Dārjeeling. There were other *kutcha* roads connecting the police station headquarters with the sub-divisional headquarters, but they do not merit separate mention except the *kutcha* roads between Itāhār and Rāiganj, between Bālurghāt and Kardaha via Tapan, and between Ābidpur and Kardaha

via Gangārāmpur. All these roads served as trade-routes. Another such road worth mentioning is the Raiganj-Kunarhat-Patiraj Hat Road.

Railway communication.

In 1947 the only railheads were Hili, Rādhikāpur, Kāliāganj and Rāiganj. The rail heads at Rādhikāpur, Kāliāganj and Rāiganj were and still are on the metre gauge line between Pārbatipur in Pakistan and Kātihār in the Purneā district of Bihar. The Railway Station of Hili is situated within Pakistan, the town of Hili having been divided into two parts in terms of the Radcliffe Award in such a way that the whole of the Railway Station falls on the Pakistan side. This railhead is, therefore, not of much use so far as communication with the rest of West Bengal is concerned. Immediately after the creation of the district and before the new roads were constructed, goods traffic to Calcutta on the broad gauge line had to be sent through Hili via Pakistan, especially so far as the Bālurghāt Sadar sub-division was concerned.

At the time when the district was created it had practically no communications. The roads were non-existent or in awfully bad shape and the railway lines ran through Pakistan.

Improvement in road communications during 1951-61 : National Highways, State Highways, Major District Roads, Other District Roads, Village Roads and Bridges.

The situation was radically altered during the two Five Year Plan periods (1951-61). During this period 30 miles (48 km) of National Highway, 74 miles (119 km) of State Highway, 8 miles (13 km) of Major District Roads, 18.5 miles (29.8 km) of Other District Roads, 14 miles (23 km) of Village Roads and 2,392 running feet (729 m) of bridges were constructed in the district. A tarmacadamised road now exists right from Hili to Sonāpurghāt on the bank of the Mahānandā via Bālurghāt, Gangārāmpur, Buniādpur, Kāliāganj, Rāiganj, Dālkholā and Islāmpur. Of this road the portion between Dālkholā and Sonāpurghāt belongs to National Highway-31 while the road between Bālurghāt to Buniādpur and Buniādpur to Rāiganj falls on the State Highway. The stretch of road between Rāiganj and Dālkholā forms a portion of National Highway-34. The two extremities of the district are thus connected by these roads. There are new bridges over the Ātrāi, the Punarbhavā, the Tāngan, the Brāhmani, the Kulik, the Nāgar, the Gāndhār, the Khari, the Chhirāmati and the Buri Mahānandā. The road linking Hili with Sonāpur on the bank of the Mahānandā in the northern part of the district connects the police station headquarters of Hili, Gangārāmpur, Bangshihāri, Kushmandi, Kāliāganj, Hemtābād, Rāiganj, Karandighi, Islāmpur and Choprā with Bālurghāt, the headquarters town of the district. The headquarters of Kumārganj police station is linked with Bālurghāt by the Major District Road which runs between Kumārganj to Patirām and links up with the State Highway between Bālurghāt and Buniādpur at Patirām, just a little to the Bālurghāt side of the Highway. Although this is a tarmacadamised road, the river Ātrāi is not bridged along the alignment of this road, as a result of which one has to cross

over by ferry. The headquarters of the Goālpokhar police station is connected with the sub-divisional headquarters of Islāmpur by the Kishanganj-Dinajpur Road which links up with National Highway No. 31. This is a tarmacadamised road fully bridged. The only roads to police station headquarters which are not connected either with the sub-divisional or with the district headquarters by all-weather roads are the headquarters of the police stations Tapan in Bālurghāt Sadar and Itāhār in Rāiganj sub-divisions. Itāhār is expected to be connected with Rāiganj in the near future when the new alignment of National Highway-34 between Gājol in Māldā and Rāiganj is completed. The stone metal work on this road has already been done, but the bridges have not yet been constructed. There is a road between Bālurghāt and Laskarhāt on the Pakistan border at the south. The length of the road is thirteen miles (about twenty-one km) and the width of the hard-crust is eight feet (about two and a half m). The road has been completed up to the black-topped stage for the first eight miles (thirteen km) and further work is in progress. There is another road which starts from the Gajol-Bangshihari State Highway at Daulatpur and terminates at Dehābanda, an important village on the Churaman-Itahar-Kushmandi Road. It passes through Patirājpur, a paddy-growing area and an important *hāt*. The road has been completed up to the black-topped stage except for a few miles. The length of the road is thirteen miles (about twenty-one km), and the width of the hard-crust is ten feet (about three m). The Churaman-Itahar-Kushmandi Road starts from Fatepur in Kushmandi police station and terminates at the east bank of the river Mahānandā at Churāmanghāt, the border of the district. It passes through the important villages of Dehābanda, Patirājpur having an important *hāt*, Itāhār police station, Churāman, etc. The road has been completed up to the black-topped stage except for a few miles, and further work is in progress. The length of the road is nineteen miles (about thirty-one km) and the width of the hard-crust is ten feet (about three m).

The Kushmandi-Mahipaldighi Road is seven miles (about eleven km) in length and takes off from Kushmandi police station on the Buniadpur-Kaliaganj-Raiganj State Highway and terminates at Mahipāldighi, near the Pakistan border. The road has not yet been completed but when it will be completed, there will be an important link with the border and Mahipāldighi. The eleven mile-long (about eighteen km) Bindol-Maharajhat Road takes off from the third mile (fifth km) of the Raiganj-Dalkhola section of National Highway-34 at a distance of three miles (about five km) from Rāiganj and terminates at Bindol near the border with East Pakistan. This road connects the important *hāt* at Bindol with Mahārājhāt and the health centre there. The last road belonging to the category of other District Roads is the

Hemtabad-Bishnupur Road via Mālan. This road is ten miles and a half (about seventeen km) in length and starts from the Hemtābād police station on the Kaliaganj-Raiganj State Highway and terminates at Bishnupur near the Pakistan border, passing through the important villages and *hāts* at Samaspur, Mālan and Bishnupur. The construction of the road is just complete. The hard-crust has a width of nine feet (about three m).

There are several roads which have been classified as village roads by the Development (Roads) Department. These are Gangarampur-Tapan Road (9 miles or about 14 km), Tapan-Kardaha Road (5.5 miles or about 9 km), Tapan-Laskarhat Road (6 miles or about 10 km), Gangarampur-Abidpur Road (8 miles or about 13 km), Kaliaganj-Kunarhat Road (6.6 miles or about 10.6 km), Hemtabad-Bangalbari Road (3 miles or about 5 km), Bindol-Dhalgaon Road (6.63 miles or about 10.7 km), Chownágra-Rasakhoa Road (8 miles or about 13 km), Link Road to Aluabari Road from Islāmpur on National Highway-31, Dhamurgacha-Kharibari Road (3 miles or about 5 km), Kunarhat-Durgapur Road (8.4 miles or about 13 km) and Azadpur-Pransagar Road (4 miles 40 chains or about 6 km). The Gangarampur-Tapan Road, the Tapan-Kardaha Road and the Gangarampur-Abidpur Road have been completed upto the *jhama*-metal consolidation stage while the work on the Tapan-Laskarhat Road, Kaliaganj-Kunarhat Road, Kunarhat-Durgapur Road, Bindol-Dhalgaon Road and Azadpur-Pransagar Road have been completed upto the stage of earth-work. The work on the Hemtabad-Bangalbari Road has reached the painting stage.

In addition to these, the District Board maintains 2.07 miles (3.33 km) of brick metalled road, 439.37 miles (707.39 km) of motorable road and 470.50 miles (757.51 km) of non-motorable *kutcha* roads.

Passenger and goods transport by road, railways and air.—Railways.

The district is thus now fairly well served by roads but the deficiency in regard to rail communication still exists. It is, no doubt, true that goods and passenger traffic originating in Rāiganj and Islāmpur sub-divisions can proceed to the other parts of the state by rail but the condition of Bālurghāt Sadar sub-division has remained as it was in 1947. The produce

Lorries.

of Bālurghāt sent for export to the other parts of West Bengal or to other States have, therefore, to be moved by lorries to Kāliāganj for booking by rail. Some volume of goods are

Air transport.

also sent by air from Bālurghāt. The airstrip was constructed by the State Government in 1950. Subsequently, in 1953, the administration of the airstrip was taken over by the Director-General of Civil Aviation of the Government of India. Formerly the runway was built by placing wire matting, but recently a bricktopped runway has been constructed. At

Communication with Calcutta.

present, M/s. Balurghat Air Transport Co. Ltd. run a service between Bālurghāt and Calcutta for carrying goods, but passengers are also allowed to travel in the same plane at

their own risk. The flights are, however, extremely irregular. But many people put up with the inconvenience in order to cut short the duration of the normal journey from Bālurghāt to Calcutta via Mānickchakghāt and Rājmahalghāt. Ordinarily, passengers for Calcutta from Bālurghāt travel upto Mānickchakghāt via Māldā by buses run by the North Bengal State Transport Corporation and cross the Ganges by ferry to avail of the train that leaves Rājmahalghāt.

Bus services. On account of the deficiency in rail communication, public buses run to capacity on all the sanctioned routes in the district. Some of these public buses are run by the North Bengal State Transport Corporation and some by private operators.

State-owned service. The North Bengal State Transport Corporation was formed under the Road Transport Corporation Act, 1950. This Transport Corporation is owned jointly by the Government of West Bengal and the Government of India; the latter furnished one-third of the capital, and the former contributed the rest. The routes covered by the North Bengal State Transport Corporation in the district are the following:—

(1) Balurghat-Hili
(2) Balurghat-Gangarampur-Buniadpur-Kaliaganj-Raiganj
(3) Balurghat-Gangarampur-Tapan-Kardaha
(4) Raiganj-Hemtabad-Bishnupur
(5) Raiganj-Karandighi-Dalkhola-Kishanganj-Islampur
(6) Raiganj-Dalkhola-Kishanganj-Chopra-Sonapur
(7) Islampur-Kishanganj-Goalpokhar
(8) Buniadpur-Gangarampur-Tapan-Kardaha

There are some routes which lie partly within the district of West Dinājpur and partly in the district of Māldā or in the district of Dārjeeling. These routes are:

(1) Malda-Gajol-Buniadpur-Gangarampur-Patiram-Balurghat
(2) Malda-Gajol-Buniadpur-Kaliaganj-Raiganj
(3) Raiganj-Kishanganj-Islampur-Sonapur-Siliguri (through Bihar at Kishanganj)
(4) Balurghat-Gangarampur-Buniadpur-Kaliaganj-Raiganj-Dalkhola-Kishanganj-Islampur-Sonapur-Siliguri
(5) Siliguri-Sonapur
(6) Siliguri-Sonapur-Islampur-Karandighi
(7) Malda-Milki-Mathurapur-Manikchak
(8) Malda-Kaliachak-Khejuriaghat

The total mileage covered by all the routes which lie entirely in the district is three hundred and sixty-four miles (about five hundred and eighty-six km) while the mileage covered by the routes which cover other districts also is six hundred and

fifteen miles (about nine hundred and ninety km). In addition, the North Bengal State Transport Corporation also provides '*hat* buses' on some days in the week linking important market places with important towns.

Privately-owned services.

Private operators run forty-nine buses* on eleven routes in the district. These routes are:—

(1) Balurghat-Hili
(2) Balurghat-Kaliaganj
(3) Balurghat-Raiganj
(4) Balurghat-Kumarganj
(5) Balurghat-Samjia
(6) Balurghat-Gangarampur
(7) Balurghat-Tior
(8) Raiganj-Harirampur
(9) Raiganj-Kaliaganj
(10) Raiganj-Bhatunhat
(11) Raiganj-Itahar

The more important of these routes are the Balurghat-Hili and the Balurghat-Kaliaganj routes as fifteen and seventeen buses respectively ply on these routes, each of these fifteen and seventeen buses running every alternate day. The seating capacity of a bus is twenty-five excluding the driver. The fare structure is shown in the statement below:

Name of routes	Rate of front seat per mile	Rate of rear seat per mile
Balurghat-Hili	0.06 nP	0.05 nP
Balurghat-Kaliaganj	0.09 nP	0.06 nP
Other Routes	0.11 nP	0.08 nP

Cycle-rickshaws.

These bus services are augmented by cycle-rickshaws which ply between places separated by short distances. The number of such cycle-rickshaws in the district according to the Collector was six hundred and seventeen in 1961. There are also a few contract carriages.

Bullock and buffalo carts.

For going from one village to another the traditional modes of conveyance like bullock and buffalo carts are still used.

Lorries

One hundred and forty-one lorries ply in the district. These carry goods from producing centres to places of primary storage, from places of primary storage to places of secondary storage and ultimately to the railheads for export outside the district. They also carry the goods imported into the district and help in their distribution throughout the district. The freight charged by these lorries is four and half pies per maund per mile.

* Figure correct up to 6.11.62.

(c) TRAVEL AND TOURIST FACILITIES

There is a small Circuit House at Bālurghāt. It is under the management of the Collector. There are District Board Dak Bungalows at Bālurghāt, Rāiganj and Islāmpur. Two Inspection Bungalows at Rāiganj and Islāmpur are maintained by the Public Works Department, one at Rāiganj by the Development (Roads) Department, and another at Rāiganj by the Forests Department. The Forests Department also maintains cottage-type Forest Bungalows at Dāngā in Bālurghāt sub-division and at Choprā in Islāmpur sub-division. The District Board maintains Inspection Bungalows at the following places:

> Patirām (in Bālurghāt police station), Kumārganj, Gangārāmpur, Laskarhāt (in Tapan police station), Bindol (in Rāiganj police station), Kāliāganj, Itāhār, Durgāpur (in Itāhār police station), Harirāmpur (in Bangshihāri police station), Sehole (in Kushmandi police station), Choprā, Dālkholā (in Karandighi police station), Gopālpur (in Karandighi police station) and Debiganj (in Goālpokhar police station).

There are some private establishments that go by the name of hotels, at Bālurghāt, Gangārāmpur and Rāiganj. The P.W.D. Inspection Bungalow at Islāmpur and the Development (Roads) Department Bungalow at Rāiganj are fairly comfortable. A comfortable double-storied building for the Circuit House has been constructed at Bālurghāt near the General Hospital. This is expected to be ready for occupation shortly.

There is a Tourist Club styled as "East India Tourists Club" at Rāiganj. It is registered under the Societies Registration Act XXI of 1860.

(d) POSTS AND TELEGRAPHS AND TELEPHONES

On the partition of Bengal in August, 1947, the area forming the West Dinājpur district contained five Sub-Post Offices and twenty-two Extra-Departmental Branch Offices. In 1956, the Sub-Post Office at Bālurghāt was upgraded to the position of a Head Office. Sixty-three Post Offices were opened in the district during the First Five Year Plan period and thirty-four during the Second Five Year Plan period. The administration of the thirty-four Post Offices (including one Sub-Office and one Extra-Departmental Sub-Office) in the Islāmpur sub-division was transferred to the West Bengal Postal Circle as late as the 1st July, 1960. The total number of Post Offices in the West Dinājpur district at the end of the Second Plan period was, therefore, one Head Office, twelve

Sub-Offices and one hundred and forty-five Extra-Departmental Offices, *i.e.*, one hundred and fifty-eight Post Offices in all. During the Third Five Year Plan period uptil now, a number of new Post Offices were opened in the district, and according to the latest report available, there are now one Head Office, six Sub-Offices, six Extra-Departmental Sub-Offices and one hundred and fifty-six Extra-Departmental Branch Offices in the district.

There are postal and telegraph facilities at the headquarters of Sadar, Rāiganj and Islāmpur sub-divisions as also at the headquarters of the police stations of Hili, Gangārāmpur and Kāliāganj. Although there are Post Offices at the headquarters of the remaining police stations, there are no telegraph facilities in them. The Head Post Office is situated at Bālurghāt with a Sub-Office at each of the places of Hili, Gangārāmpur, Kāliāganj, Rāiganj, Mohanbāti (in Rāiganj town) and Islāmpur. In addition, there are Extra-Departmental Sub-Offices at each of the *mouzas* of Tior and Aptair in police station Hili, Rāmchandrapur, Rāghabpur and Jachi in police station Gangārāmpur, and Dālkholā in police station Karandighi. There are one Extra-Departmental Branch Post Office in Hili police station, nine in Bālurghāt police station, ten in Kumārganj police station, two in Tapan police station, thirty-one in Gangārāmpur police station, nine in Bangshihāri police station, seven in Kushmandi police station, fourteen in Kāliāganj police station, six in Hemtābād police station, fourteen in Rāiganj police station, twelve in Itāhār police station, fifteen in Goālpokhar police station, eight in Islāmpur police station, eleven in Choprā police station, and seven in Karandighi police station.

About one lakh and sixty-five thousand ordinary articles of the letter mail are handled in a year by all the Post Offices in the district, both for delivery to the members of the local public and for despatch through the outward mails of these Post Offices. The Post Offices in the district handled, among others, the following articles during the month of September, 1962:

Money Orders issued	27,425	of the value of Rs. 1,520,087.01 nP
Money Orders paid	14,267	of the value of Rs. 894,838.86 nP
Registered letters booked	10,895	
Registered parcels booked	1,052	
Insured letters booked	447	
Insured parcels booked	496	

There are four Telephone Exchanges in the district, one each at Hili, Bālurghāt, Kāliāganj and Rāiganj. The Hili

Exchange has a capacity of fifty connections and the capacity of each of the other three Exchanges is one hundred. The number of working connections in each of these Exchanges is as follows:

Hili	21
Balurghat	90
Kaliaganj	61
Raiganj	91

CHAPTER VIII

ECONOMIC TRENDS

(a) LIVELIHOOD PATTERN AND GENERAL LEVEL OF EMPLOYMENT IN DIFFERENT OCCUPATIONS

Workers and non-workers.

During the 1961 Census, it was found that the workers formed 32.7 per cent of the population of the district. The 67.3 per cent non-workers included (1) full time students or children attending schools who did no other work, (2) adult women who were engaged exclusively in unpaid home duties, (3) dependents, (4) retired persons who had not been re-employed, rentiers, persons living on agricultural or non-agricultural royalties and dividends or other persons of independent means for securing which they did not have to work, (5) beggars, vagrants or independent women without indication of sources of income and others of unspecified sources of existence, (6) convicts in jail, inmates of penal, mental or charitable institutions, (7) persons seeking employment for the first time, and (8) persons employed before but unemployed at the time of Census count and seeking employment. All other persons were workers. The total number of persons who were seeking employment for the first time was 2,231 and the total number of persons who had been employed before but were then out of employment and seeking employment was 1,544.

Unemployment.

Agricultural workers.

Of the 433,144 workers, women formed 9.4 per cent. Majority of workers were employed in agriculture, as much as 82.9 per cent of the workers being so employed. In the district of West Dinājpur as it was constituted in 1951, the percentage of agricultural workers to the total workers was 78.9, and the number of acres of cultivated land per agricultural worker was 3.79 It is not possible to calculate the area of cultivated land per agricultural worker in 1961 in respect of the old district of West Dinājpur, for want of data. The percentage of agricultural workers to the total workers became 82.9 in 1961. For the district as a whole, an agricultural worker worked on only 3.23 acres (1.31 ha) of cultivated land on an average. This shows that under-employment in the agricultural sector increased in the decade 1951-61. Assuming that on the average an agricultural worker in this district is capable of cultivating 3.79 acres (1.53 ha) as was the case in 1951, the extent of under-employment may be calculated from the difference between that area and the area that was being cultivated in 1961 by an agricultural worker. On this basis, under-employment in the agricultural sector in 1961 was 14.8 per cent if we assume that there was

Under-employment in the agricultural sector.

no under-employment in 1951. Among the agricultural workers, agricultural labourers formed 25.46 per cent. A substantial number of these agricultural labourers might be more usefully employed in the industrial sector, but for that, the starting of industrial enterprises in the district would appear to be a pre-requisite.

Workers in household industries.

The Census of 1961 defined a new concept of "household industries". 9,797 persons were found in such household industries. The term "household industry" meant an industry which was carried on by at least one member of a household and which was smaller in size than a registered factory and for which the workshop was located either where the household resided or in the *mouza* in which the household resided, irrespective of the product. Household industries, therefore, included much of what passes under the name of cottage industry and also some other industries.

Other Workers.

So far as other workers were concerned, leaving aside agricultural workers, they were classified in accordance with the classification prepared by the Directorate-General of Employment & Training, Ministry of Labour & Employment, Government of India. According to this classification, the 0 Division included livestock, forestry, fishing and hunting, Division 1 mining and quarrying, Divisions 2 and 3 manufacturing, Division 4 construction, Division 5 electricity, gas, water and sanitary services, Division 6 trade and commerce, Division 7 transport, storage and communication, Division 8 services, and Division 9 activities not adequately described. According to this classification, the persons at work who were not employed in the agricultural sector or in household industries could be classified as on page 147.

The important point to note is that most of the workers were employed in the services and in trade and commerce.

Occupational classification of non-agricultural workers.

The classification of the non-agricultural workers according to their occupations in the Table on page 148 where Division 0 represents professional, technical and related workers, Division 1 administrative, executive and managerial workers, Division 2 clerical and related workers, Division 3 sales workers, Division 4 farmers, fishermen, hunters, loggers and related workers, Division 5 miners, quarrymen and related workers, Division 6 workers in transport and communication occupations, Divisions 7 & 8 craftsmen, production process workers and labourers not elsewhere classified, Division 9 service, sport and recreation workers, and Division X workers not classifiable by occupation, shows the relative importance of the various occupations.

INDUSTRIAL CLASSIFICATION OF PERSONS AT WORK IN NON-HOUSEHOLD INDUSTRY, TRADE, BUSINESS, PROFESSION OR SERVICE

Division	Rural			Urban			Rural-cum-urban		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
0	1,830	142	1,972	221	2	223	2,051	144	2,195
1	..	4	4	7	..	7	7	4	11
2-3	2,644	828	3,472	3,040	230	3,270	5,684	1,058	6,742
4	1,009	117	1,126	885	46	931	1,894	163	2,057
5	62	31	93	137	45	182	199	76	275
6	9,589	725	10,314	7,715	96	7,811	17,304	821	18,125
7	985	1	986	1,868	35	1,903	2,853	36	2,889
8	15,235	807	16,042	8,359	837	9,196	23,594	1,644	25,238
9	5,793	756	6,549	225	3	228	6,018	759	6,777
Total:	37,147	3,411	40,558	22,457	1,294	23,751	59,604	4,705	64,309

OCCUPATIONAL CLASSIFICATION OF NON-AGRICULTURAL WORKERS

Division	Persons	Males	Females
0	6,666	6,217	449
1	1,049	1,041	8
2	3,517	3,455	62
3	17,230	16,427	803
4	3,467	3,215	252
5	31	31	..
6	2,006	1,993	13
7	7,840	6,977	863
8	21,465	15,130	6,335
9	10,133	9,220	913
X	702	697	5
	74,106	64,403	9,703

Employment Exchange.

As the number of persons seeking employment is not large, there is no separate Employment Exchange in the district. The Employment Exchange at Māldā caters to the needs of the unemployed of the district of West Dinājpur as well.

(b) GENERAL LEVELS OF WAGES AND PRICES AND STANDARD OF LIVING

Wage-levels for agricultural labourers.

We do not have much information on levels of wages prevailing in the district in different occupations, except wage-levels for agricutural labourers. The condition of agricultural labourers who form twenty-one per cent of the total working force of the district, does not differ materially from that prevailing in most other districts of West Bengal. The principal crops of the district are *āman* and *āus* paddy and jute, and agricultural labourers have to find employment in the cultivation of these crops. The rates of agricultural wages which prevailed during 1960-61 were between Rs. 1.43 nP and Rs. 2.50 nP per man per day without food, for female labourers between Rs. 1.06 nP and Rs. 2.00 nP per person per day without food, and for boys only between Re. 1.00 nP and Rs. 1.75 nP per person per day without food. During off seasons the agricultural labourers find it rather difficult to make both ends meet. The situation has been complicated by the fact that *kishans*, who used to be maintained by the intermediaries, have now joined the ranks of agricultural labourers.

Wholesale prices.

As against this, the average wholesale prices prevailing in some important *hāts* of the district in respect of several key agricultural commodities during the years 1957, 1958, 1959, 1960, 1961 and 1962 were as follows:

AVERAGE OF WHOLESALE MARKET PRICES OF AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS (AVERAGE QUALITY) IN SOME IMPORTANT *HĀTS*

Name of month	Years	Prices of commodities (per maund)			
		Rice (Coarse)	Rice (Medium)	Pulses (whole): Urid (Blacksmall)	Jute (Indian Northern), Garsat white (Olitorious), loose
		Rs. nP	Rs. nP	Rs. nP	Rs. nP
January	1957	18.83	19.62	15.00	27.70
	1958	19.50	20.00	14.00	23.42
	1959	N.A.	17.75	12.75	16.42
	1960	N.A.	21.08	14.75	29.00
	1961	18.50	20.50	14.75	47.25
	1962	21.00	21.00	15.25	26.00
First week April	1957	21.33	22.17	16.25	24.00
	1958	23.75	24.33	14.50	20.54
	1959	N.A	N.A.	15.00	17.92
	1960	N.A.	23.00	15.00	27.50
	1961	20.00	19.50	15.00	50.75
	1962	22.89	22.19	18.48	23.23
August	1957	24.33	23.83	20.00	26.10
	1958	28.75	29.25	N.A.	21.75
	1959	N.A.	26.00	N.A.	20.71
	1960	N.A.	23.75	16.00	34.42
	1961	23.00	21.00	N.A.	46.21
	1962	24.38	24.76	24.86	26.06

N.A. = Not Available.

NOTE: Decimal coinage was not in force in January, 1957, but the prices for that month are given in decimal coinage so that they may be compared with the other price-figures in the table. Similarly, all the prices are given per maund for easy comparability, although metric measures have already been introduced in the markets covered in this table.

Although there are variations, the usual rise in wholesale prices of different varieties of rice and pulses as the year proceeds is obvious from the preceding Table. The upward trend of the wholesale price-level in respect of these two commodities over the years is also a noticeable feature. The wholesale price-level in respect of jute, however, has gone down slightly since 1957, although there were temporary rises during the years 1960 and 1961, especially in the latter year.

Retail price indices.

The preceding Table gives merely the wholesale prices of a few commodities. The indices of retail prices of some important articles of food for the years 1957 to 1961, given on page 151, though covering Bālurghāt town only, give us an approximate idea of the level of retail prices prevailing in the district during these years as compared to that of 1950.

Cost of living indices.

The cost of living indices for the Bālurghāt urban centre for the years 1956-1960 are perhaps a good tentative indicator of the standard of living in the district.

COST OF LIVING INDEX NUMBERS
(Base: November, 1950 = 100)
Monthly Averages
Centre—Bālurghāt

Item of Consumption	Year	Monthly expenditure level Rs. 1-100	Rs. 101-200	Rs. 201-350	Rs. 351-700	Rs. 701 and above
Food	1956	90.5	89.4	87.1	84.6	82.8
	1957	91.5	90.6	88.7	86.6	84.8
	1958	97.1	96.0	92.8	89.7	85.8
	1959	95.2	93.7	91.3	88.7	86.3
	1960	99.3	97.9	95.6	93.1	90.7
All combined	1956	94.6	93.3	92.0	92.2	90.0
	1957	97.4	96.0	94.7	95.2	92.1
	1958	103.6	102.1	100.1	100.4	95.8
	1959	103.1	101.4	99.5	100.2	96.4
	1960	104.9	103.3	101.2	101.1	97.0

Working class consumer price indices.

An idea of the comparative standard of living prevailing among the working classes may also be had from the Table on page 152, in which the consumer price index numbers for working classes in the districts of Māldā and West Dināipur, as calculated by the Labour Directorate, are shown.

INDEX NUMBERS OF RETAIL PRICES OF ARTICLES OF FOOD

BALURGHAT TOWN

(Base Year: November, 1950=100)

Articles	1957				1958				1959				1960				1961		
	Average for twelve months	Jan.	Apl	Aug.	Average for twelve months	Jan.	Apl.	Aug.	Average for twelve months	Jan.	Apl.	Aug.	Average for twelve months	Jan.	Apl.	Aug.	Average for twelve months	Jan.	Apl.	Aug.
Cereals :																				
Rice	107	98	111	113	125	102	119	149	114	96	100	130	116	116	115	122	110	109	101	113
Rice Products	102	190	100	107	130	99	138	156	126	118	120	136	126	121	125	133	123	114	118	130
Pulses :																				
Mug	74	72	62	86	92	84	90	102	85	90	82	84	87	87	79	92	90	92	92	90
Musur	80	84	76	82	83	78	88	86	82	90	88	78	75	78	74	74	73	74	74	72
Kalai	94	94	84	94	93	94	94	94	83	82	84	84	87	84	84	90	100	90	88	105
Other Pulses	79	81	77	79	83	79	78	88	91	99	94	89	81	83	83	81	80	81	81	79
Salt :	75	71	71	81	65	71	76	67	57	57	57	57	69	57	57	76	76	76	76	76
Sugar :																				
Sugar	94	93	87	99	101	99	99	105	109	99	105	124	110	111	107	107	108	107	107	107
Gur	53	62	55	50	65	57	57	70	73	70	70	76	58	76	57	57	57	57	57	57

CONSUMER PRICE INDEX NUMBERS FOR WORKING CLASS

Māldā-West Dinājpur area
Base Year : 1951 = 100

Year	Month	Index Numbers					
		Food	Fuel and lighting	Cloth-ing	Miscel-laneous	House-rent	Com-bined
1956	Average for 12 months	80	91	78	78	100	81
	January	68	89	73	78	100	73
	April	74	87	74	79	100	77
	August	88	96	80	78	100	87
1957	Average for 12 months	85	88	74	81	100	84
	January	77	88	75	79	100	79
	April	80	88	75	79	100	81
	August	89	88	73	82	100	87
1958	Average for 12 months	93	86	74	85	100	90
	January	78	86	74	83	100	80
	April	87	86	73	84	100	86
	August	108	87	74	84	100	100
1959	Average for 12 months	86	86	72	87	100	85
	January	75	86	72	88	100	78
	April	78	85	72	89	100	80
	August	94	87	72	86	100	91
1960	Average for 12 months	88	88	79	86	100	87
	January	87	84	75	87	100	86
	April	87	84	76	86	100	86
	August	92	91	81	85	100	90
1961	Average for 12 months	89	96	83	91	100	90
	January	82	93	80	89	100	84
	April	84	94	84	92	100	87
	August	94	100	84	91	100	94
1962	Average for 12 months	97	96	90	98	100	96
	January	91	96	86	98	100	92
	April	93	95	87	98	100	94
	August	99	95	91	97	100	98

On analysing the Table on working class consumer price indices, we find that the combined price indices and the price indices for food rose almost invariably, as the year proceeded. We also notice that the twelve-month-average combined price indices and the food price indices both rose in the years 1956, 1957 and 1958, dropped considerably in 1959, and then again rose in the years 1960, 1961 and 1962; the indices attained the highest level in 1962. The average indices in respect of fuel and lighting and clothing prices show a different pattern of a slight decline from 1956 to 1959, and then a rise from 1960 to 1962. The average index numbers in respect of prices of miscellaneous items show a continuous rise over the seven years excepting one point decline in 1960 from the level of 1959. There have been absolutely no variations in house-rent index numbers.

Family budgets.

It is not possible to give an idea of the family budgets of the well-to-do, middle and lower middle classes throughout the district, as sufficient information is not available. The Table that follows, although it gives information about the families residing at Bālurghāt town only, may be taken as indicative of the trend of family budgets among the various income groups during the period 1950-51 to 1955-56:

PERCENTAGE EXPENDITURE ON DIFFERENT GROUPS OF ITEMS OF CONSUMPTION BY DIFFERENT EXPENDITURE LEVELS

Centre—Bālurghāt

Groups of items of consumption	Years	Monthly expenditure levels (in Rupees) 1-100	101-200	201-350	351-700	701 and above
Food	1950-51	62.25	63.09	55.51	48.78	38.96
	1955-56	62.96	55.72	54.02	47.23	39.12
Clothing	1950-51	6.70	5.62	5.43	5.26	4.77
	1955-56	7.15	7.98	8.27	7.91	7.80
Fuel and light	1950-51	9.90	8.33	6.36	5.83	3.73
	1955-56	9.42	7.52	6.09	4.62	3.70
Housing	1950-51 (House-rent)	4.14	4.75	6.12	5.44	5.70
	1955-56	4.71	7.54	5.00	7.75	7.30
Miscellaneous	1950-51	17.01	18.21	26.58	34.69	46.84
	1955-56	15.76	21.24	26.62	32.49	42.08
Total:	1950-51	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00
	1955-56	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

CHAPTER IX

GENERAL ADMINISTRATION

A. The State Government Set-up

(a) THE OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT MAGISTRATE & COLLECTOR

The District Magistrate is at the head of the administration of the district. He is also the Collector and, as such, the chief officer responsible for the collection of State revenue. He is assisted in the discharge of his revenue duties by one Additional District Magistrate who is also the Additional District Magistrate for the district of Māldā.

The district is divided into three sub-divisions of Islāmpur, Rāiganj and Bālurghāt. Bālurghāt is the Sadar sub-division, and the District Magistrate resides at Bālurghāt.

Staff-strength.

The number of Gazetted Officers sanctioned for the General Administration Department in each of the sub-divisions is as follows:

(1) Islāmpur sub-division

(a) Deputy Magistrates	2
(b) Sub-Deputy Magistrates	1+5 (Block Development Officers)

(2) Rāiganj sub-division

(a) Deputy Magistrates	3
(b) Sub-Deputy Magistrates	1+6 (Block Development Officers)

In the Sadar sub-division, the sanctioned strength of Gazetted Officers for the General Administration Department is:

(a) Deputy Magistrates	5
(b) Sub-Deputy Magistrates	2+5 (Block Development Officers)

Of these, one Deputy Magistrate acts as the Sub-Divisional Officer and another as the Second Officer. Five of the seven Sub-Deputy Magistrates are Block Development Officers.

Police Stations.

Each of these sub-divisions is divided into the number of police stations noted against each of them below:

(1) Islāmpur	(i) Choprā, (ii) Karandighi, (iii) Islāmpur and (iv) Goālpokhar.
(2) Rāiganj	(i) Rāiganj, (ii) Hemtābād, (iii) Kāliāganj, (iv) Itāhār, (v) Bangshihāri and (vi) Kushmandi.
(3) Sadar	(i) Hili, (ii) Bālurghāt, (iii) Kumārganj, (iv) Gangārāmpur and (v) Tapan.

Development Blocks and Circles.

Previously the Sadar sub-division used to be divided into two circles which were constituted as follows:

(1) Bālurghāt circle	constituted with Bālurghāt, Hili and Kumārganj police stations.
(2) Gangārāmpur circle	constituted with Gangārāmpur and Tapan police stations.

Rāiganj was similarly divided into the following circles constituted with the police stations noted against the names of each circle:

(1) Rāiganj circle	constituted with Rāiganj, Itāhār and Hemtābād police stations.
(2) Kāliāganj circle	constituted with Kāliāganj, Kushmandi and Bangshihāri police stations.

The Islāmpur sub-division became a part of the district only in 1956, and besides a Resident Magistrate, there was only one Sub-Deputy Magistrate. At the time there was no circle in the sub-division, and circle work was managed by the Sub-Deputy Magistrate. With the introduction of the Community Development programme, Development Blocks were established in Islāmpur and Karandighi police stations, and a circle was created with Choprā and Goālpokhar police stations in February, 1961. A Development Block has since been established in Choprā police station, and Goālpokhar has been bifurcated to form two Development Blocks.

A Block Development Officer has been placed in charge of each Development Block. The Block Development Officer of a Development Block also acts as the Circle Officer in respect of his Block area.

The entire district has been covered by Development Blocks, and circles have been abolished. The number of Development Blocks in the different sub-divisions of the district is indicated below.

1. In Bālurghāt sub-division 5 Development Blocks
2. In Rāiganj sub-division 6 Development Blocks
3. In Islāmpur sub-division 5 Development Blocks

Maintenance of law and order.

The District Magistrate is responsible for the maintenance of law and order in the district, in which task he is assisted by the Superintendent of Police. Criminal cases triable by Magistrates are disposed of by the trying Magistrates posted in the sub-divisions. The sanctioned strength of Magistrates consists of 2 First Class Magistrates and 2 Second Class Magistrates in the Sadar sub-division, 1 First Class Magistrate, 1 Second Class Magistrate and 1 Third Class Magistrate in

Rāiganj sub-division, and 1 First Class Magistrate and 1 Second Class Magistrate in Islāmpur sub-division.

Other duties of the Magistrate-Collector.

These duties of the Magistrate-Collector have almost been relegated to the background by the new duties cast on him by executive orders. He is in charge of community development in the district, and he is assisted in the discharge of that duty by the Special Officer, Development & Planning, the Sub-Divisional Officers and the Block Development Officers. He is also responsible for the relief and rehabilitation of displaced persons from East Pakistan within the district for which a new department has come into existence since Independence. As examples of such other new departments the Publicity, Election, Tribal Welfare and the Indo-Pakistan Passport Departments may be cited. Activities of some of the old departments have also increased many times. For example, the Loans Department, the Famine Relief Department, the Land Acquisition Department and the Motor Vehicles Department may be cited. Although the supply of food and other essential commodities is looked after by officers of the Food & Supplies Department posted in the district, the District Magistrate is thereby not relieved of any worry on that score. His responsibility for ensuring that the people of the district have enough foodstuffs and consumer goods is not diminished in any way on account of the presence of the local officers of the Food & Supplies Department in the district.

The District Development Council.

Apart from the Departments or subjects with which he is directly concerned, the District Magistrate in his capacity of Chairman of the District Development Council has to keep himself posted about the activities of all the Departments of the Government in the district which may have a bearing on the improvement of the condition of the people.

(b) REGISTRATION

The Collector is the *ex officio* Registrar of the district. The work of the Registration Directorate of the Law Department is looked after by the District Sub-Registrar, whose headquarters is at Bālurghāt. There are Sub-Registrars at Gangārāmpur, Rāiganj and Islāmpur and also a Joint Sub-Registrar of Raiganj at Kāliāganj.

(c) EXCISE DEPARTMENT

The Collector is at the head of the Excise Department of the district. The Department is in immediate charge of a Superintendent of Excise who is posted at Bālurghāt. There are four Sub-Inspectors of Excise in the district, one being posted at each of the following places: Bālurghāt, Rāiganj,

Dālkholā and Islāmpur. A Petty Officer is attached to each of the Balurghat and Raiganj Offices. A special patrol party is also stationed at Hili in charge of another Petty Officer. There are twenty-five Excise Peons in the district. The duty of the Excise Department consists in issuing and renewing excise licences, enforcing the conditions under which such licences are issued, and the collection of excise revenue. The officers of the Department have also to see that illicit preparation and sale of liquor or other excise articles does not go unpunished and that the smuggling of contraband narcotics and intoxicating liquors is kept under check.

(d) PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

The work of the Public Works Department is looked after by an Executive Engineer who is in charge of the West Dinajpur Division, comprising of the entire West Dinājpur district. For facility of work, the West Dinajpur Division has been divided into six sub-divisions, viz., (1) Balurghat sub-division, (2) Islampur sub-division, (3) Raiganj Construction sub-division No. 1, (4) Raiganj Construction sub-division No. 2, (5) Dalkhola Construction sub-division and (6) Islampur Construction sub-division, each in charge of an Assistant Engineer.

The Public Works Department looks after the maintenance of Government buildings borne on its books and also constructs new buildings of other Departments of the Government with their prior approval. Maintenance of roads is also the responsibility of this Department. Quite a number of buildings have been constructed by the Public Works Department during recent years among which mention may be made of the buildings for the 136-bedded Sadar Hospital, the Police Barrack and the new Circuit House at Bālurghāt; the Seed Multiplication Farm at Mājhiān, police station Bālurghāt; the 50-bedded Sub-divisional Hospital and the Sub-Jail at Rāiganj; the Primary Health Centres at Gangārāmpur, Hemtābād and Karandighi; the Thana Health Centre at Itāhār; and the Sub-divisional headquarters at Islāmpur.

The Executive Engineer, West Dinajpur Division, is under the administrative control of the Superintending Engineer, Northern Circle, who has his headquarters at Jalpāiguri.

(e) IRRIGATION & WATERWAYS DEPARTMENT

The Irrigation Department is represented by the Executive Engineer, Malda Irrigation Division. The territorial jurisdiction of the Executive Engineer extends over both the districts of Māldā and West Dinājpur. For administrative convenience the division is divided into the four sub-divisions

of (1) Malda Irrigation Sub-division, (2) Malda Investigation Sub-division, (3) Raiganj Irrigation Sub-division and (4) Balurghat Irrigation Sub-division. Raiganj Irrigation Sub-division is divided into five Sections with headquarters at Islāmpur, Dālkholā, Itāhār, Rāiganj and Kāliāganj, and Balurghat Irrigation Sub-division is similarly divided into three Sections with Sectional offices at Kushmandi, Bangshihāri and Hili. The duties of the Irrigation Department consist of irrigation, flood control and drainage.

(f) FORESTS DEPARTMENT

The affairs of the Forests Department in the district are looked after by the Divisional Forest Officer, Malda Division, with headquarters at Māldā. His territorial jurisdiction covers the districts of West Dinājpur and Māldā and that part of the present Phānsidewā police station of the Dārjeeling district which was included therein consequent on the transfer of certain territories from Bihar to West Bengal. There is a Range Officer of the rank of Forest Ranger in charge of each of the two Ranges of Balurghat and Chopra with headquarters at Bālurghāt and Choprā respectively. Under the Balurghat Range comprising of the entire district of West Dinājpur excluding Islampur civil sub-division, there are four Beats, viz., Balurghat, Hemtabad, Kushmandi and Tapan with headquarters at Bālurghāt, Rāiganj, Ayesā and Gorail respectively. The Chopra Range, which is comprised of the entire Islāmpur civil sub-division of the district of West Dinājpur and that part of the present Phānsidewā police station of the Dārjeeling district which was included therein on the transfer of certain territories from Bihar to West Bengal, is divided into three Beats, viz., Chopra, Goalpokhar and Chitalghata with headquarters at Choprā, Goālpokhar and Chitalghātā respectively. The Chitalghata Beat includes the part of the present Phānsidewā police station of the Dārjeeling district included in the Chopra Range. A Beat is in charge of a Beat Officer of the rank of Deputy Ranger/Forester, and there are one or two Forest Guards in each Beat.

(g) EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

Inspection of schools.

The Education Department in the district is represented by the District Inspector of Schools, the District Social Education Officer and the District Officer for Physical Education and Youth Welfare. The territorial jurisdiction of each of these Officers extends over the entire district. The education of girls is looked after by the District Inspectress of Schools, Jalpaiguri, with headquarters at Jalpāiguri. The District Inspectress of Schools is in charge of the districts of Jalpāiguri,

Dārjeeling, Māldā and West Dinājpur. The District Inspector of Schools, while he has jurisdiction and supervision over the secondary schools and primary schools in the district, takes under his special care the non-Government secondary schools, aided and unaided, training institutions at the primary level and primary and junior basic schools. He is *ex officio* Member-Secretary of the District School Board. He is assisted by 4 Assistant Inspectors of Schools and 14 Sub-Inspectors of Schools. In 1960-61 the expenditure for maintaining the office of the District Inspector of Schools amounted to Rs. 102,711.

The District School Board.

The District School Board for the new district of West Dinājpur was constituted in terms of Government Order No. 186-Edn. dated 17.1.48 with the District Magistrate as the *ex officio* President. The office of the District School Board started functioning at Bālurghāt with only two assistants. One Assistant Inspector of Schools was deputed to the District School Board, and it was only on 6.11.52 that the District Inspector of Schools joined as the *ex officio* Secretary of the Board. From 1956 the District Magistrate ceased to be the *ex officio* President of the District School Board, his place being taken by an elected member of the Board. In 1960-61 there were 1106 primary schools including 69 junior basic schools in the rural areas of the district under the control of the District School Board. In the same year there were 90 junior high schools, 3 senior basic schools, 27 high schools and 10 higher secondary schools in the district.

Social education.

The District Social Education Officer is primarily responsible for spread of literacy amongst illiterate adults, promotion and development of public library service, and arrangement of cultural and recreational activities. He takes under his special care adult education centres, night schools, rural libraries, etc., which are established for implementation of the social education programme.

Physical education and youth welfare

The main functions of the District Officer for Physical Education and Youth Welfare are to organise and develop physical education and recreational activities (especially outdoor) in educational institutions and organisations in the district, and to co-ordinate and promote recognised organisations in the field of physical education. He also acts as the Secretary of the District Youth Welfare Council. There is one District Organiser of Physical Education to assist him. In 1960-61 a sum of Rs. 11,963 was spent on the establishment of the District Officer for Physical Education.

(h) AGRICULTURE DEPARTMENT

The District Agricultural Officer is posted in the district for initiating the cultivators in improved techniques in agriculture. He is assisted in his work by a Sub-Divisional

Agricultural Officer stationed at the headquarters of each sub-division. The Department runs seven Seed Multiplication Farms each of which is in immediate charge of an Agricultural Demonstrator. The other staff at a Thana Seed Multiplication Farm consists of a Pump Driver, a Cattle Keeper and a *Chowkidār*. There are also Sub-Divisional Agricultural Seed Stores, each in charge of an Overseer. For field work, there are one Agricultural Extension Officer, one Agricultural Demonstrator and one Fitter Mechanic in every Development Block. The actual expenditure for the Office of the District Agricultural Officer for the year 1960-61 was Rs. 289,802.

Agricultural marketing.

The District Agricultural Marketing Organisation is in immediate charge of the District Agricultural Marketing Officer whose headquarters is at Bālurghāt. The organisation investigates into marketing conditions in respect of agricultural and animal husbandry products, observes and reports to different Government agencies and big co-operative trading organisations in the country market trends in the district, compiles and transmits price bulletins to various bodies, introduces and promotes improved marketing practices such as standard weights and measures, improved storage and warehousing, and co-operative marketing, and scrutinises applications for loans from private markets and co-operative marketing societies. A Sub-Divisional Agricultural Marketing Officer is posted at the headquarters of each of the three sub-divisions. Besides office staff, there is one Market Reporter at Bālurghāt and another at Rāiganj. The annual expenditure for maintaining the Organisation is about Rs. 25,000.

(i) ANIMAL HUSBANDRY AND VETERINARY SERVICES DEPARTMENT

Animal husbandry and livestock.

There is a District Livestock Officer for the two districts of Māldā and West Dinājpur with headquarters at Māldā. There is an Assistant Livestock Officer for each civil sub-division. These officers implement schemes for improvement of the quality of livestock and poultry.

Veterinary services.

There is a District Veterinary Officer with headquarters at Bālurghāt. There are 9 Veterinary Assistant Surgeons under him, one each at Islāmpur, Itāhār, Kumārganj, Gangārāmpur, Rāiganj, Kāliāganj, Hemtābād, Tapan and Karandighi. There are also 1 Itinerary Veterinary Assistant Surgeon with headquarters at Bālurghāt, and 1 Stationary Veterinary Assistant Surgeon in charge of the State Veterinary Hospital (B Class) at Islāmpur. There is another A Class State Veterinary Hospital at Bālurghāt in charge of a Veterinary Inspector. The Veterinary Officer and his staff are employed for the prevention of diseases among livestock and poultry.

(j) FISHERIES DEPARTMENT

The functions of the Department are to grant loans and subsidies to owners of lands and fishermen for improvement of pisciculture and for increasing the quantity of fish caught. The local officer of the Department is the District Fishery Officer, who also gives technical advice to fish-rearers and fishermen. There is an Assistant Fishery Officer in each sub-division including the Sadar sub-division, together with a Sub-Overseer. The expenditure on the staff amounted to Rs. 32,000 in 1961-62. The District Fishery Officer works under the supervision of the Superintendent of Fisheries, Northern Range, whose headquarters is at Siliguri.

(k) INDUSTRIES DEPARTMENT

There is a District Industrial Officer for the district with headquarters at Bālurghāt. He undertakes surveys of the cottage and small-scale industries in the district, assists these industries in securing raw materials and financial help, and in marketing their products. He explores possibilities of new industries in the district and renders all possible help for their establishment. He promotes industrial co-operatives. He is the representative of the Director of Industries, West Bengal, on district-level committees dealing with different developmental matters. He is assisted by one Investigator in the discharge of his duties.

(l) DEVELOPMENT (ROADS) DEPARTMENT

This district comes under the executive jurisdiction of two Construction Divisions, viz., the Darjeeling Construction Division with its headquarters at Siliguri, and the Malda Construction Division with its headquarters at Māldā. Each Construction Division is in charge of an Executive Engineer. The Raiganj Construction sub-division of the Darjeeling Construction Division falls within this district. The remaining part of the district is covered by the Kaliaganj and Balurghat Construction sub-divisions of the Malda Construction Division. Each of the three Construction sub-divisions is in charge of an Assistant Engineer who functions through Sectional Officers. There are three Sections in the Raiganj Construction sub-division, and their headquarters are at Itāhār, Rāiganj and Tulkhola (Bridge Section). The Balurghat Construction sub-division has two Sections with headquarters at Bālurghāt and Bangshihāri respectively. Three Sectional Officers are posted under the Kaliaganj Construction sub-division, and they have their headquarters at Kushmandi, Kāliāganj and Hemtābād (Daulatpur). The Construction Divisions are in charge of construction of new roads and improvement of existing roads in their respective jurisdictions.

(m) HOME (PUBLICITY) DEPARTMENT

As pointed out in Section (a) above, the District Magistrate has administrative charge of the District Publicity Organisation. The immediate responsibility for Government publicity work in the district rests with the District Publicity Officer who has his headquarters at Bālurghāt. The District Publicity Organisation keeps the public informed of Government activities, especially activities relating to development, through meetings, cinema shows, group discussions, magic lantern shows, etc. The Organisation conveys to different Government Departments public grievances and public and press reactions to their policies and functioning, through the usual channels. Government publicity literature is also distributed.

The District Publicity Officer has under his direct control the mobile District Audio-Visual Unit. The (35 millimetre) Cinema Section of the Unit holds free public shows of Central and State Government documentaries and educative shorts all over the district. The District Audio-Visual Unit has also a mobile Medical Section with a Sub-Assistant Surgeon of the State Health Service (Non-Gazetted) in immediate charge. The Medical Section seeks to educate the rural masses in a more hygienic way of life ; to create their interest and earn their good will, the Section renders medical service and distributes some medicines, free of cost. Three more mobile (16 millimetre) cinema units have been placed under the supervision of the Block Development Officers of Raiganj, Kaliaganj and Islampur Development Blocks.

The District Information Centre at Bālurghāt maintains informative literature on developmental activities of the Government. There are also Block-level Information Centres at Kumarganj, Gangarampur, Kaliaganj, Hemtabad, Raiganj and Islampur Development Blocks.

There is a Sub-Divisional Publicity Officer at the headquarters of each of the three sub-divisions. There is also a Sub-Divisional Publicity Officer (Tribal Welfare) at the headquarters of the district, to carry on publicity work among the tribal people.

Under the Rural and School Broadcasting Schemes of the State Government, 99 rural radio sets have been supplied to community listening centres and schools in the villages, at a highly subsidised price.

(n) CO-OPERATION DEPARTMENT

There is an Assistant Registrar of Co-operative Societies for the district, with headquarters at Bālurghāt. He registers co-operative societies, inspects and supervises their functioning, audits their accounts, takes steps for reorganisation and revitalization of weak and moribund societies, and for

liquidation of societies which cannot be at all revitalized, and implements co-operative development programmes. Besides the usual office staff, he has two Gazetted Officers to assist him in the discharge of his duties; the District Auditor of Co-operative Societies looks after the auditing of the accounts of co-operative societies, while the Co-operative Development Officer attends to implementation of co-operative development programmes. 18 Inspectors of Co-operative Societies (9 for Block areas and 9 for non-Block areas) and 19 Auditors of Co-operative Societies are posted in different areas in the district to inspect the working of the societies in the district, audit their accounts, arbitrate disputes, distribute loans, etc.

(o) ADMINISTRATION OF AGRICULTURAL INCOME-TAX

Agricultural Income-Tax of the district is collected by the Agricultural Income-Tax Officer stationed at Māldā. This is an office under the State Government.

(p) ADMINISTRATION OF COMMERCIAL TAXES

Officers of the Directorate of Commercial Taxes are entrusted with the task of levying Sales Tax under different statutes (State as well as Central), at varying rates for different classes of commodities. An Officer designated as Commercial Tax Officer having jurisdiction over both the districts of Māldā and West Dinājpur is stationed at Māldā. He is under the administrative control of the Assistant Commissioner of Commercial Taxes, Jalpaiguri Circle, Jalpāiguri, who is the appellate authority also. The expenditure on the Office of the Commercial Tax Officer in 1961-62 amounted to Rs. 30,864.

B. THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT SET-UP

(a) ADMINISTRATION OF INCOME-TAX

The Income-Tax Department is represented by the Income-Tax Office located at Māldā. This Office collects the Income-Tax for both the districts of West Dinājpur and Māldā. There are three Income-Tax Officers stationed at Māldā. The expenditure on this Office in 1961-62 was Rs. 73,570.

(b) NATIONAL SAVINGS ORGANIZATION

The West Bengal Regional Office of the National Savings Organization has a District Savings Organizer in the district.

His headquarters is at Bālurghāt. He publicises the different savings schemes of the Organisation, answers to public queries about them, and recruits Agents and supervises their work. There were 42 Agents on the 31st March, 1962, who were authorised to collect money from members of the public for purchase of different types of National Savings Certificates. Agents are paid a commission on the collections made by them.

(c) THE POSTAL DEPARTMENT

The administration of the entire postal and telegraph system of the district has been placed under the control of the Superintendent of Post Offices, Malda Division, with headquarters at Māldā. There is a Sub-Divisional Inspector of Post Offices at Bālurghāt, and another at Rāiganj to assist him. There are 1 Head Post Office, 6 Sub-Offices, 6 Extra-Departmental Sub-Offices and 156 Extra-Departmental Branch Offices in the district at present. The Head Post Office at Bālurghāt is in charge of a Head Postmaster in the Higher Selection Grade. The Sub Post Offices at Kāliāganj, Rāiganj, Islāmpur and Gangārāmpur are under Sub-Postmasters in the Lower Selection Grade. There are Sub-Postmasters in the usual Time Scale in the other Sub Post Offices. The Branch Post Offices in the rural areas are manned by Extra-Departmental Agents. There are in all 64 Sub-Postmasters and Clerks, 150 Extra-Departmental Sub-Postmasters and Branch Postmasters and a Delivery Staff of 195 (Departmental and Extra-Departmental) in the district. There are also 4 Telephone Exchanges in the district.

C. OFFICES OF STATUTORY BODIES

THE LIFE INSURANCE CORPORATION

The business of the Life Insurance Corporation in the district of West Dinājpur is controlled by the Branch Office at Māldā. The Corporation has Agents to secure new business in the district. They are paid commission on the amount of business secured.

NOTE: Details about the offices of the District Judge, the Superintendent of Police and the Chief Medical Officer of Health have been given in the Chapters on Law and Order and Justice and on Medical and Public Health Services respectively.

CHAPTER X

REVENUE ADMINISTRATION

(a) LAND REVENUE ADMINISTRATION—HISTORY AND RECENT CHANGES

History of land revenue assessment and management.

An account of the revenue administration in the district in the Hindu period has already been given in Chapter II on History, on the basis of materials available in the inscriptions of the then reigning kings. It is, therefore, not necessary to repeat that account here. Nothing much is known about the revenue administration in the Muslim period prior to the conquest of Bengal by Ākbar. It is probable that some rough and ready method was in existence at that time for the collection of revenue through the intermediary of the local Hindu chiefs or *zamindārs*. The country was perhaps parcelled out among various local commanders who raised as much money as they could from the lands assigned to them for the support of themselves and their troops. It is after the conquest of Bengal by Ākbar that we have some account of the land revenue administration in the State. It is possible to draw certain general conclusions from the account of land management given in the *Āin-i-Ākbari* of Abul Fazl, but it is difficult to say whether the system of land revenue administration as described by him actually existed in Bengal and, in particular, in the district of West Dinājpur.

Akbar's reign.

Ākbar's empire was divided into *subahs* of which Bengal was one. At the head of the administration of the *subah* was a *sipāh sālār*. He was primarily the commander-in-chief of the imperial forces stationed in the *subah*, but he was also the head of the civil administration. One of his specific duties was to turn his attention to the increase of agriculture. He was required to retain impartial collectors of revenue. Each *subah* was divided into a number of *sarkārs* and each *sarkār* was divided into a number of *parganās* or *mahāls*. The *sarkār* and the *parganā* were units of revenue administration. It was the duty of the *amalguzār* or collector of revenue to measure arable lands, assess the produce and fix the rent. It was also his duty to collect the revenue. The land revenue system was apparently *rāyatwar* and the revenue was collected by the *amalguzār* with the help of the *muqaddam* (chief village revenue officer), the *kārkun* (registrar of collections) and the *patwari* (land steward). The *faujdār* was in charge of a number of *parganās*. He was expected to aid the revenue collector in the collection of revenue from recalcitrant tenants or *zamindārs*. The land was either administered as crown lands, in which case they were known as *khālsā* lands, or

were bestowed on eminent individuals as *jāgirs*. The latter class of lands were known as *jāgir* lands. It is reasonable to assume that in *khālsā* lands some form of *rāyatwar* system prevailed. According to James Grant, the Rājā of Dinājpur "enjoyed the annual special privilege of administering internally his own district, without being subject like the other zemindars, to either hustabood investigations, or the immediate controul of a Mussulman aumildar." The history of the Dinājpur Rāj can be traced from the time of Ākbar.

The Dinajpur Raj.

The Dinājpur Rāj was founded by a *brahmachāri* either towards the end of the sixteenth century or at the beginning of the seventeenth century. The property was left by him to a disciple named Shrimanta Datta Chaudhury. The history of the family has been narrated in some detail in Chapter II and here only the genealogy is given:

Shrimanta Datta

- Harish Chandra (son of Shrimanta)
- Daughter
  - Sukdeb Ghosh (son of daughter of Shrimanta)—1642-1677.
    - Joydeb (son of Sukdeb)—1677-82.
    - Prannath (son of Sukdeb and brother of Joydeb)—1682-1722 or 1723.
      - Ramnath (adopted son of Prannath)—1722-1760.
        - Baidyanath—1760-1780.
          - Saraswati (widow of Baidyanath)
            - Radhanath (adopted, died 1801)
              - Tripura Sundari (widow of Radhanath)
                - Gobindanath (adopted, came of age 1817, died 1841)
                  - Taraknath (died 1865)
                    - Shyamamohinee (widow of Taraknath)
                      - Girijanath (adopted, died 1919)
                        - Jagadishnath

The family held sway over the district in return for payment of land revenue to the *Subahdār*. They were powerful local *zamindārs* who were accepted by the Mughul rulers as obviously the most proper agency for collection of the revenues in the estates under their control. "So long as the Zemindar of Dinagepoor paid the Soobadar of Bengal a certain portion

of the rents he received, he was allowed to rule without interference over near three quarters of a million of people. Such was the position in which Prannath found himself placed, by the death of his brother in A.D. 1682." (Westmacott). When Murshid Quli Khān carried out his land reforms and divided the country into *chāklās* in 1722, Prannath was made the *Chāklādār* of the *chāklās* which constituted his *zamindāri* of Dinājpur, but, as Westmacott points out, "Prannath's rights dated from a period anterior to his appointment of *chukladar*, which he obtained, as being obviously the proper person to collect the revenues of his estates." According to James Grant, the Rājā of Dinājpur had the "special privilege of administering internally his own district, without being subject like the other Zemindars to either hustabood investigations or the immediate controul of a Mussulman aumildar."

Murshid Quli's reforms and the Dinajpur Raj.

The East India Company's Diwani: various experiments in land revenue administration.

The district came under the control of the East India Company in 1765, the year in which the Company obtained the *Diwāni* of Bengal. Acquisition of the *Diwāni* by the East India Company did not bring about any immediate change of a major nature in the administrative machinery, as the Company wanted to remain content with the surplus revenue of Bengal after meeting their obligations to the Nawāb and the Emperor Shāh 'Alam. They, therefore, appointed Muhammad Rezā Khān as their *Nāib* or deputy at Murshidābād. In order to acquire control over the administration they had forced Najm-ud-daulah, Mir Jāfar's son, to consent to the appointment of Muhammad Rezā Khān as his deputy as well, before agreeing to recognize his succession to the *musnud*. A Resident was appointed at Murshidābād to supervise the work of Muhammad Rezā Khān in regard to revenue collection but such supervision must have been nominal, as we find the Court of Directors, in 1768, laying the blame for short collection of the revenue of Dinājpur and some other districts on the Nawāb and Muhammad Rezā Khān. In July, 1768, an *Aumil* (*Āmil*)—one Braja Mohan Mitra (Buzi Mohun Metre)—was appointed for collection of revenue of the Dinājpur district. A change in this system was brought about during the Governorship of Verelst. It was then decided to associate the Company's servants in the collection of revenue in the districts. In consequence of this plan Mr. H. Cottrell was appointed Supravisor. The Supravisors were not only to supervise the collection of revenue, but to gather detailed information on every aspect of the district with particular stress on the revenue system. They had to work under the supervision of the Resident of Murshidābād. In 1770, a Comptrolling Council was established at Murshidābād. This measure was presumably taken after the great famine of 1770 as a measure of administrative efficiency. Muhammad Rezā Khān was removed from his office in 1771, and the East India Company declared their intention to stand forth as the *Diwān*, and, by the agency of the Company's servants, to take upon

themselves the entire care and management of the revenue. A Proclamation was issued on the 11th May, 1772, in Calcutta, informing the public that the Court of Directors had been pleased to divest Muhammad Rezā Khān of the station of *Nāib Diwān*. In 1772, Warren Hastings arrived in Bengal as Governor and President of the Council at Fort William, and on May 14, 1772, decided on a policy in regard to the carrying out of the mandate of the Court of Directors to stand forth as the *Diwān*. It was decided that a Committee of Circuit consisting of the Governor and four members of the Council was to be appointed to visit the principal districts and to form the settlement for five years. The lands were to be let out to revenue farmers for a period of five years. The Supravisors were to be called Collectors and they were each to be assisted by an Indian officer called *Diwān*. The Committee of Circuit visited Dinājpur in January, 1773. The Comptrolling Council of Revenue was replaced in 1772 by the Committee of Revenue with the Governor as the President. In 1773, the Court of Directors ordered that the English Collectors should be withdrawn. The Governor and the Council were authorised to substitute some other plan of making themselves acquainted with the exact value of every district and giving relief to the inhabitants until some lasting arrangement could be devised. The reason for the decision to withdraw the Collectors from the districts is rather interesting. It was expressed as follows by the Court of Directors:

> "As the sending our junior servants into the provinces as Supravisors has not been attended with the wished for success, but has enabled them to monopolize the whole trade of the country, we, therefore, direct that they may be withdrawn as soon as possible, and we leave it to you to substitute some other plan . . ."

The Governor and the Council, therefore, decided that each district was to be superintended by a *Diwān* or *Aumil* except such as had been let entire to the *zamindārs* or responsible farmers, who, in such cases, were invested with that authority. A Committee of Revenue was to be formed at the Presidency consisting of two members of the Board and three senior servants below the Council. The *Diwān* was to correspond with the President of the Committee and the *Rāy Rāyān*. Occasional Commissioners or Inspectors were to be deputed for local investigation, if necessary, and they were to be chosen from among the Company's servants. Five Provincial Councils were set up, each consisting of a Chief, four senior servants, Persian Translator, Accountant and assistants, and a *Diwān* appointed by the Government. The Provincial Councils were to correspond with the Governor and Council in the Revenue Department, and the *Diwān* with the *Rāy Rāyān*. There was to be a Provincial Council at Dinājpur having charge of the district of Dinājpur, Silberries (Salburi), Purneā, Edrāckpur, Bāhārbund, Cooch Behār, and Rāngāmāti.

The Provincial Councils which were established in 1773 were abolished in 1781, in which year Collectors were reposted to districts. In that year the Judges of the *Mufassal Diwāni Ādālat* were also appointed as Magistrates, and the Collectors were thus left with the task of revenue collection and of acting as a civil court in revenue matters only. In May, 1786, Mr. George Hatch was appointed Collector of Dinājpur but took over charge on the 19th January, 1786. Prior to his appointment as Collector of the district, Mr. Hatch was the Collector of the *zamindāri* of Dinājpur.

Land revenue administration in 1787.

An idea of the system of land revenue administration prevalent at that time can be obtained from a letter which Mr. Hatch wrote to the President and Members of the Board of Revenue in March, 1787. According to him, the zemindari (*zamindāri*) settlement (Bundabast or *bundobust*) of the district was formed under three distinct heads, namely, (1) Kaâs Mehals (*khās mahāls*), (2) Pergunnaatee Musteeazery (*parganāti mustājiri*) and (3) Huzzoory Izaradars (*huzuri izārādārs*). The collections from the *khās mahāls* were made by chowdries (*chaudhuris*) or *nāibs* and Mustophees (*mustaufis*) sent from the *zamindārs*' cutcherry (*kutchery*). These *chaudhuris* or *nāibs* and *mustaufis* executed instruments called Furd (*furd*) for a fixed Jumma (*jamā*) which was supposed to be computed from reports of a class of officials annually sent into the Mofussil (*mufassal*). These *chaudhuris* or *nāibs* and *mustaufis* on arrival in the *mufassal* tried to realise the amounts stipulated by them, but instead of collecting the amount direct, they, in their turn, dealt with farmers of revenue, who, through agents or intermediaries, established contacts with the Mundulls (*mandals*) of the villages. The *huzuri izārādārs* were persons who took leases of land direct from the Sadar Kutchery and who paid rent direct at the Sadar Kutchery.

The *parganāti mustājiri* related to *mustājirs* or farmers of revenues of pergunnahs (*parganās*).

According to Mr. Hatch, the *jamā* was fixed annually. He suggested modification of the existing system by a system in which the settlement was to be made direct with the *mandals* of villages with the joint security of the *rāyats*. He also recommended that the terms of the patta (*pāttā*) in the possession of the tenants should be made more specific so as to eliminate the scope of exaction by revenue officials. He further suggested a reduction in the administrative hierarchy for revenue collection.

It appears from another letter of Mr. Hatch dated the 15th January, 1788, addressed to the President and Members of the Board of Revenue that the Committee of Circuit fixed the *jamā* at *Siccā* Rs. 1,755,710 for the year 1179 B.S. The next year it was increased to *Siccā* Rs. 1,828,061. The receipts during these years, however, amounted only to *Siccā* Rs. 1,405,585 and *Siccā* Rs. 1,352,150 respectively. This

probably compelled the authorities to revert to the former *jamā* of *Siccā* Rs. 1,460,444. This *jamā* continued for seven years after which in the year of 1188 B.S. the *jamā* was raised to *Siccā* Rs. 1,660,444 with the addition of *Siccā* Rs. 200,000 by putting the *zamindāri* to farm. The farmer was none other than the infamous Devi Singh. This increased *jamā* could not be maintained and from the year 1190 B.S. the original *jamā* of *Siccā* Rs. 1,460,444 had again to be reverted to. Judging from the state of collections, it must be quite clear that even the original *jamā* was too high in relation to the resources of the district, as, between the years 1179 B.S. and 1193 B.S., except the years during which Devi Singh was the farmer of revenue, the full *jamā* was never realised. Mr. Hatch, however, was of the opinion that the land was under-assessed, and the reason for his opinion was that whenever a cultivator who had complained of over-assessment was faced with the prospect of having his lands measured and a proper assessment made, he promptly withdrew his complaint. According to him, the short collections were due to the defective administrative machinery used for the collection of revenue.

The Decennial Settlement, 1790.

In 1194 B.S. the demand remained more or less the same. In 1197 B.S., that is, 1790 A.D., the Decennial Settlement was made and the *jamā* was fixed at *Siccā* Rs. 1,402,086 on a gross produce of *Siccā* Rs. 1,933,382. This works out at 72.5 per cent of the gross produce and appears to be exorbitant in comparison with Akbar's principle of taking one-sixth of the gross produce by way of rent. As is well-known, the Decennial Settlement was converted into Permanent Settlement by Lord Cornwallis in 1793.

The Permanent Settlement, 1793.

The Settlement of 1934-40.

It appears from the Settlement Report of Mr. F. O. Bell, which relates to the period of 1934-1940, that there were 1,055 revenue paying private estates on the tauzi roll of the undivided district of Dinājpur. 1,047 of these estates were permanently settled with an annual revenue of Rs. 1,530,206, and 8 were temporarily settled with a revenue of Rs. 511. There were 6 Crown estates having an area of 4,746 acres excluding T.302 which had been bought by the Collector in a revenue sale only recently. Tauzi Nos. 1 to 516 were "Nizamat mahals"—permanently settled estates originally settled at the Decennial Settlement and entered as separate estates when tauzi Nos. were first allotted in 1851. 517 to 783 and 791 were "daimi" or resumed estates, settled at 50 per cent of the assets during the resumption proceedings of 1836 to 1849. Tauzi 784 had become a Crown estate. Some of these estates had lands pertaining to them in other districts like Rājshāhi, Bogrā, Rangpur, Māldā, Jalpāiguri and Purneā, while there were also estates in these districts the lands of which were situated in the district of Dinājpur.

The position after the Partition.

Immediately after the partition of the district and formation of the district of West Dinājpur there were 481 revenue paying estates. The total annual demand of land revenue was

Rs. 489,636. The biggest estate was held by the Dinājpur Rāj and the annual demand on account of this estate was Rs. 11,783-8as-11p. on account of land revenue only.

The Estates Acquisition Act, 1953.—Its effects.

The West Bengal Estates Acquisition Act, 1953, came into force on the 12th February, 1954. The effect of this was that all the intermediaries who stood between the tillers of the soil and the State ceased to exist. The State, therefore, entered into direct dealings with the tillers of the soil, and as a first step, *ad hoc* rent roll was prepared on the basis of returns submitted by ex-intermediaries. According to that rent roll, the demand for 1362 B.S. consisted of Rs. 1,418,534 as Rent, Rs. 54,870 as Road and Public Works Cesses and Rs. 92,822 as Education Cess. This demand related to only the sub-divisions of Bālurghāt and Rāiganj. With the inclusion of Islāmpur sub-division in the district, the demand for 1363 B.S. consisted of Rs. 2,361,211 as Rent, Rs. 120,155 as Road and Public Works Cesses and Rs. 87,893 as Education Cess. It may be recalled that the approximate value of agricultural produce exported out of the district annually is Rupees six crores. The total demand from land, therefore, is only a small fraction of the gross produce.

The number of intermediaries who used to take the difference between the present annual demand and the land revenue as it stood before implementation of the Estates Acquisition Act was 60,335. The number of persons who now pay revenue direct to the State is 498,006. There was, therefore, one intermediary for approximately every eight tillers of the soil. For realising rent from these 498,006 tenants, and for other work in connection with the Estates Acquisition Act, the State has been compelled to create a fairly large hierarchy of officials. The Collector is officially at the head of the land revenue administration of the district, but day-to-day administration is looked after by a part-time Additional District Magistrate who is in charge of estates acquisition work in both the districts of Māldā and West Dinājpur and whose headquarters is at Māldā. For each sub-division there is a Sub-Divisional Land Reforms Officer at each of the Sub-Divisional headquarters of Bālurghāt, Rāiganj and Islāmpur. The whole district is divided into nine collection circles, each of which is under the charge of a Junior Land Reforms Officer. The revenue is actually collected by Karmacharis in the areas transferred from Bihar, and by Tahsildars in the other areas. There are 241 collection blocks, each in charge of either a Karmachari or a Tahsildar. On an average, the annual demand of a collection block amounts to Rs. 10,426.

The Estates Acquisition Act has provided for payment of compensation to the ex-intermediaries for acquisition of their interests. The compensation is being assessed by the Settlement Department and up to the 1st February, 1963, the Compensation Assessment Rolls have been finally published in respect of compensation payable to 46,237 intermediaries.

Rs. 1,792,219 and Rs. 204,767 respectively have so far been paid to the ex-intermediaries under Chapters II and VI of West Bengal Estates Acquisition Act as *ad interim* compensation under Sections 12(1) and 12(2) respectively by the Collector. Rs. 220,112 as principal and Rs. 43,650 as interest, i.e., a total of Rs. 263,762 was also paid by the 31st March, 1963, by way of final compensation under Section 23 of Chapter III of the Act. The administrative machinery for payment of *ad interim* compensation to ex-intermediaries is under the direct control of the Additional District Magistrate of Māldā and West Dinājpur. There is a District Compensation Officer with headquarters at Bālurghāt and a Sub-Divisional Compensation Officer at the headquarters of each of the three sub-divisions.

Lands in excess of the ceilings prescribed under the West Bengal Estates Acquisition Act, which have so far been taken possession of by the Collector, have not as yet been settled permanently. The surplus agricultural lands are, however, not lying fallow, and are being settled temporarily on year to year basis with the actual cultivators having less than five acres of land, on payment of an annual fee of Rs. 10 per acre.

Settlement operations are in progress, and when they are completed, the final picture regarding total number of tenants, the incidence of rent, etc., may be expected to emerge clearly.

The land revenue administration of the district offers a peculiar difficulty in that while in the sub-divisions of Bālurghāt and Rāiganj the West Bengal Estates Acquisition Act prevails, in the newly added sub-division of Islāmpur, the Bihar Land Reforms Act is in operation.

(b) ADMINISTRATION OF OTHER SOURCES OF REVENUE, CENTRAL AS WELL AS STATE

Income-tax.

In 1957-58 there were 291 assessees from whom income-tax was demanded, the total demand being Rs. 199,000. The amount collected was Rs. 144,000. In 1958-59 the number of assessees rose to 320 and the demand to Rs. 428,000 but the collection fell to Rs. 92,000. In 1959-60 the number of assessees rose still further to 786, the total demand was Rs. 341,000 and the actual collection Rs. 290,000. In 1960-61 the number of assessees was 877, the total demand Rs. 536,000 and the actual collection Rs. 342,000. In 1961-62 the number of assessees fell to 582, but the demand increased to Rs. 589,300 and the total collection fell to Rs. [illegible] The highest taxable income during the period between 1957-58 and 1961-62 was Rs. 300,000.

Commercial taxes.

Taxation on the sale of goods was introduced in Bengal in July, 1941, by the Bengal Finance (Sales Tax) Act of 1941 in order to make an addition to the revenues of Bengal. The

Act with suitable adaptation is still in force. The West Bengal Sales Tax Act, 1954, provided for the imposition of a tax on sales of cigarettes. These two Acts may thus be taken together so far as the collection of sales-tax is concerned. In 1957-58 the total tax realised within the district under the provisions of these two Acts amounted to Rs. 623,536. It fell to Rs. 252,292 in 1958-59. The amount collected in 1961-62 was Rs. 327,219.

The Bengal Motor Spirit Sales Taxation Act was enacted in 1941 to provide for the levy of a tax on retail sales of motor spirits to further the construction of new roads in Bengal. This law after necessary adaptations is still in force. The amount collected under this Act in 1957-58 within the district was Rs. 142,848. In 1961-62 the total tax on retail sales of motor spirits collected within the district amounted to Rs. 171,664.

The Bengal Raw Jute Taxation Act, 1941, was passed to provide for the levy of tax on raw jute purchased by the occupiers of jute-mills and by shippers of jute, for the purpose of carrying out measures for the stabilisation of jute prices and for furthering the interests of the growers of jute in the State and of the jute industry generally. This Act is also in force, after suitable adaptations. The total amount collected under this Act in 1957-58 was Rs. 3,898. In 1961-62 it was Rs. 3,713.

The Central Sales Tax Act, 1956, provides for taxes on sales of goods in the course of inter-state trade or commerce. Under this Act each State Government acts as the representative of the Government of India in regard to the collection of taxes leviable under this Act and accruing within that particular State. The law provides that the proceeds (reduced by the cost of collection) in any financial year of any tax levied and collected under this Act in any State on behalf of the Government of India shall, except in so far as those proceeds represent proceeds attributable to Union Territories, be assigned to that State and shall be retained by it. The amount collected every year under this Act, however, is insignificant. A sum of Rs. 143 only was collected in 1957-58. The highest amount collected between 1957-58 and 1961-62 was Rs. 5,285 in the year 1959-60. In 1961-62 the amount collected was only Rs. 1,586.

Amusement tax and sale of stamps.

An amount of Rs. 88,320 was collected as amusement tax in the district in 1959-60. During the same year Rs. 392,000 were realised from sale of stamps other than Court Fee stamps. The sale of Court Fee stamps brought in another Rs. 170,000.

Agricultural income-tax.

In 1959-60 Rs. 208,668 was collected in the districts of Māldā and West Dinājpur by way of agricultural income-tax.

CHAPTER XI

LAW AND ORDER AND JUSTICE

(a) INCIDENCE OF CRIME

The district of West Dinājpur as it exists to-day was constituted in 1956 with the addition of portions of Purneā district in Bihar. A few villages to the north of the Mahānandā was transferred to the Phānsidewā police station of the Dārjeeling district in 1959 but otherwise the size of the district has remained unchanged since November, 1956. Statistics relating to crime in the district would therefore be relevant only from the year 1957. The statement below gives in a nutshell the incidence of crime in the district during the years 1957, 1958, 1959 and 1960 so far as some principal types of crimes are concerned.

Varieties of crimes.

Year	Types of offence								
	Dacoity	Robbery	Burglary	Theft (excepting cattle-theft)	Cattle-theft	Murder	Rioting	Sex crimes	Smuggling
1957	52	102	474	519	74	30	102	38	87
1958	64	112	495	550	67	15	108	32	35
1959	42	37	364	499	59	20	77	34	28
1960	28	43	288	428	81	18	98	23	54
Total:	186	294	1,621	1,996	281	83	385	127	204

Their relative importance

It would be seen that theft and burglary between them accounted for as much as 75 per cent of the cases that were reported during the four years 1957-60 . Rioting comes next in order of frequency followed by robbery, smuggling, dacoity, sex crimes and murder. The pattern of crime has been more or less the same during these four years, although the number of cases of each type has varied. The people appear to be generally law-abiding, and the cases of theft and burglary may be due to poverty. Dacoity and robbery on the other hand, cannot be said to have originated solely from a motive of gain as these crimes offer to the offenders oppor-

tunities of showing their daring and recklessness. Judging from the figures relating to robbery and dacoity, it is reasonable to assume that there are a few gangs of desperadoes in the district who require to be laid by the heels in order that these two types of crimes may be brought under control. These crime figures also show that on an average 33.8 burglaries take place in a month in the whole of the district. The corresponding numbers for theft, dacoity, robbery, murder, sex crimes and smuggling are 47.4, 3.9, 6.1, 1.7, 2.6 and 4.2 respectively. For a district with a population of approximately 13 lakhs, 47.4 thefts or 33.8 burglaries per month cannot be considered to be abnormally high, but the figures of 1.7 murders, 3.9 dacoities and 6.1 robberies a month should provide cause for worry. The number of cases of smuggling is almost insignificant when one takes into account the length of the border with Pakistan which is 338 miles.

(b) ORGANIZATION OF THE POLICE FORCE

The regular police.

For the prevention and detection of crime, the district has been divided into 15 police stations. These police stations are, counting from the north, Choprā, Islāmpur, Goālpokhar and Karandighi in the Islāmpur sub-division, Rāiganj, Hemtābād, Itāhār, Kāliāganj, Kushmandi and Bangshihāri in the Rāiganj sub-division, and Gangārāmpur, Tapan, Kumārganj, Bālurghāt and Hili in the Bālurghāt Sadar sub-division.

For supervision of the police work in the police stations, the district has been divided into 5 circles. The Islāmpur circle consists of the police stations of Islāmpur and Choprā, the Dālkholā circle consists of the police stations of Goālpokhar and Karandighi, the Rāiganj circle consists of Rāiganj, Itāhār, Hemtābād and Kāliāganj police stations, the Gangārāmpur circle consists of the police stations of Gangārāmpur, Kushmandi, Tapan and Bangshihāri, and the Bālurghāt circle consists of the police stations of Hili, Bālurghāt and Kumārganj. Each circle is under an Inspector of Police. There is a Sub-Divisional Police Officer at the headquarters of each of the sub-divisions of Rāiganj and Islāmpur. There are two Deputy Superintendents of Police attached to the office of the Superintendent of Police at Bālurghāt. The work of the district police is supervised by the Superintendent of Police with headquarters at Bālurghāt.

The Superintendent of Police is also in charge of the Intelligence Branch and is assisted by an Inspector of Police and a number of Sub-Inspectors, Assistant Sub-Inspectors and other ranks.

Enforcement and Anti-Corruption Branch.

The Enforcement Branch of the establishment of the Superintendent of Police looks after the various control orders that are issued by the Government from time to time, putting restrictions on sales and movements of various commodities.

The total sanctioned strength of the District Enforcement Branch consists of 3 Inspectors, 11 Sub-Inspectors, 1 Assistant Sub-Inspector and 14 Constables. There is no separate Anti-Corruption staff for detecting cases of corruption amongst Government servants. The Officers of the Enforcement Branch look after this branch of police work also.

Prosecution staff.

The sanctioned strength of the staff for the prosecution of Police cases is as follows:

	Inspector	Sub-Inspectors	Assistant Sub-Inspectors	Head Constable	Constables
Sadar sub-division	1	2	4	1	10
Rāiganj sub-division	—	1	3	—	6
Islāmpur sub-division	—	1	3	—	6

Besides conducting cases, the Court Inspector at the Sadar sub-division appears in all bail matters before the Court of Sessions. The cases before the Court of Sessions are conducted by the Public Prosecutor and two panelled pleaders.

The Superintendent of Police receives the guidance of the Deputy Inspector General of Police, Northern Range, whose headquarters is at Jalpāiguri.

It has already been said that the district has a border of 338 miles with Pakistan. Police outposts, called border outposts, are situated at strategic points all along this border. There is also a special force of armed constables for coping with large-scale disturbances, providing treasury-guards, etc.

Railway police.

The Superintendent of Police is also the *ex officio* Additional Superintendent of Police for crimes occurring over the railways so far as the railways situated within the district are concerned.

Rural police.

The above force being insufficient to maintain law and order in every corner of the district, Chowkidars and Dafadars are maintained by the Union Boards. These Chowkidars and Dafadars form what may be termed as the rural police. In 1962, there were 1,467 Chowkidars and 212 Dafadars. The Superintendent of Police exercises control over the Chowkidars and Dafadars through the Officers-in-Charge of the police stations. Dafadars and Chowkidars working in a police station are required to attend weekly parades at the headquarters of the police station. The Officer-in-Charge of a police station is thus provided with the opportunity of keeping track of bad characters in various parts of the police station and is able to take preventive measures in advance in suitable cases for the prevention of crimes.

Village resistance groups.

Village Resistance Groups were first organised in the district in 1951 in compliance with the directive of the Inspector-General of Police. According to this scheme, able-bodied men of villages and towns are to be formed into groups for warding off attacks of dacoits in

particular and in general for the prevention of thefts. The members of these Village Resistance Groups are required to keep watch at night by turns over the village and to organise counter-attacks if the village is attacked by dacoits. Every such group has one of its literate members as its Information Officer who keeps the local police informed of the presence and movements of suspicious characters, suspicious circumstances pointing to the possibility of crimes having been committed, and prevalence of tension in the area. Representatives of active groups form a *Thana* Committee which seeks to keep all the groups active and works under the guidance of the Officer-in-Charge of the local police station. There is also a District Committee consisting of representatives of *Thana* Committees, to help the Superintendent of Police in co-ordinating all the groups in the district. Initial training to the members of the groups is arranged by the Officers-in-Charge of the police stations concerned. Then they are sent by batches to one of the fifteen-day training camps held from time to time at different places in the district. There are approximately 4,000 such Village Resistance Groups in the district covering almost all the villages. In 1960, 23 instances of good work done by these Village Resistance Groups came to the notice of the Superintendent of Police.

(c) JAILS AND LOCK-UPS

Location of jails and lock-ups.

There is a lock-up in every police station house in which prisoners are detained pending their production before the Sub-Divisional Magistrate concerned. Once the prisoners are produced before the Magistrate, they are usually detained in jail in non-bailable cases and in bailable cases where they are not able to offer bail. There are two sub-jails, one at Bālurghāt and the other at Rāiganj for the detention of under-trial prisoners and convicts. Till recently there was no jail at Islāmpur. Prisoners undergoing trial before the Magistrates' Courts at Islāmpur were detained in the Raiganj Sub-Jail and were produced in the Court of the Trial Magistrate at Islāmpur on the date fixed for the trial of cases. Recently, a sub-jail has been opened at Islāmpur.

The sanctioned accommodation in Balurghat Sub-Jail is for 34 prisoners against which 125 prisoners were detained on an average on any given day in 1958. The corresponding number in 1959 was 126 and in 1960 it was 100. The sub-jail thus remains over-crowded.

The sanctioned accommodation in the Raiganj Sub-Jail is for 66 prisoners. Against this sanctioned strength, 230 prisoners on an average were detained per day in 1958. The corresponding number in 1959 was 223 and in 1960 was 220. Here also the over-crowding is too much. Two tables given on the next page indicate the different kinds of convicts

admitted into the two sub-jails in the year 1960 classified according to age, sex and period of imprisonment:—

CLASSIFICATION OF CONVICTS ACCORDING TO AGE AND SEX

	Balurghat Sub-Jail	Raiganj Sub-Jail
Under 16 years		
Male	5	—
Female	—	—
16 to 21 years		
Male	169	24
Female	4	—
22 to 30 years		
Male	121	122
Female	3	—
31 to 40 years		
Male	62	195
Female	3	1
41 to 60 years		
Male	44	102
Female	2	1
Above 60 years		
Male	1	6
Female	—	—
Total:		
Male	402	449
Female	12	2

CLASSIFICATION OF CONVICTS ACCORDING TO PERIOD OF IMPRISONMENT

	Balurghat Sub-Jail	Raiganj Sub-Jail
Not exceeding 1 month		
Male	104	129
Female	5	2
Above 1 month and not exceeding 3 months		
Male	143	139
Female	7	—
Above 3 months and not exceeding 6 months		
Male	74	129
Female	—	—
Above 6 months and not exceeding 1 year		
Male	31	47
Female	—	—
Above 1 year and not exceeding 2 years		
Male	16	5
Female	—	—
Above 2 years and not exceeding 5 years		
Male	18	—
Female	—	—
Above 5 years and not exceeding 10 years		
Male	14	—
Female	—	—
Exceeding 10 years		
Male	2	—
Female	—	—
Sentenced to death		
Male	—	—
Female	—	—
Total:		
Male	402	449
Female	12	2

The prisoners are allowed facilities as are prescribed in the Jail Code.

Prison organization.

The charge of the sub-jails is held by the respective Sub-Divisional Officers. The Sub-Divisional Officer is assisted by a Sub-Jailor, a clerk and a prescribed number of guards. There is a part-time Medical Officer attached to each sub-jail. The Raiganj Sub-Jail being the bigger of the two, it has got a 4-bedded hospital for prisoners. The total expenditure on the Balurghat Sub-Jail in 1960-61 was Rs. 68,177 and the total expenditure on the Raiganj Sub-Jail was Rs. 103,429.

Non-official Visitors have been appointed for each of the two sub-jails. These Visitors pay visits to the sub-jails at regular intervals and they bring to the notice of the Superintendents of the sub-jails (the respective Sub-Divisional Officers) any complaints of the prisoners and also make suggestions for better management of the sub-jails.

(d) ORGANIZATION OF CIVIL AND CRIMINAL COURTS

Formerly the District and Sessions Judge of West Dinājpur had his headquarters at Jalpāiguri. He was also in charge of the districts of Jalpāiguri, Dārjeeling and Māldā. On the 1st April, 1956, the combined judgeship of the districts of West Dinājpur and Māldā started functioning under Notification No. 2222-J dated the 28th March, 1956, the headquarters of the District Judge being at Māldā. Under Notification No. 6848-J dated the 2nd November, 1956, of the Judicial Department of the Government of West Bengal, the areas covered by the Bihar and West Bengal (Transfer of Territories) Act, 1956, were included within the local limits of the jurisdiction of the District and Sessions Judge of West Dinājpur and Māldā. The District and Sessions Judge is at the head of all the civil and criminal courts in the district. He holds circuit court at Bālurghāt as and when occasion demands. There is the Court of the Subordinate Judge, West Dinajpur and Malda, with its headquarters at Māldā, which was created under Judicial Department Notification No. 2224-J dated the 28th March, 1956. The local limits of the jurisdiction of this Court comprises the revenue districts of West Dinājpur and Māldā. The presiding officer of this Court is generally appointed an Assistant Sessions Judge under orders of Government. This Officer may hold his court either at Māldā or at Bālurghāt at his discretion, and at present he actually holds circuit courts at Bālurghāt for a few days in a month. But as the pressure of work at Māldā has been heavy, this permanent court can spare only a little time for the work at Bālurghāt. The Court of the First Additional Subordinate Judge, West Dinajpur and Malda, with headquarters at Bālurghāt, was accordingly created by Government Order No. 5888-J dated the 13th September, 1956, and its tenure

is renewed from year to year. The presiding officer of this Court also is usually appointed an Assistant Sessions Judge. There are three Munsifs' Courts within the district, one at Bālurghāt, one at Rāiganj and another at Islāmpur. The Munsif of Bālurghāt exercises jurisdiction in regard to civil matters over the police stations of Bālurghāt, Kumārganj, Tapan, Gangārāmpur and Hili. The jurisdiction of the Munsif of Rāiganj extends over the police stations of Rāiganj, Hemtābād, Kāliāganj, Itāhār, Bangshihāri and Kushmandi. By Notification No. 6849-J dated the 2nd November, 1956, the areas covered by the police stations of Islāmpur, Goālpokhar, Choprā and Karandighi were added to the local limits of the jurisdiction of the Court of the Munsif of Rāiganj, and it was only in 1959 by Notification No. 2308-J dated the 14th March, 1959, that these areas were taken out of the jurisdiction of the Raiganj Munsifi and included within the local limits of jurisdiction of the newly created Munsif's Court at Islāmpur. The Munsifs have been vested with the power to try by ordinary procedures, original suits up to the value of Rs. 3,500 and arising within the local limits of their jurisdiction. They have also been vested with the powers of Judges of Courts of Small Causes for trial of suits cognizable up to the value of Rs. 300 and arising within the local limits of their jurisdiction. Appeals are heard by the Subordinate Judges.

So far as the administration of criminal justice is concerned, the Sessions Judge and the Assistant Sessions Judges try cases committed to their courts by the Magistrates who are competent to do so. The Sessions Judge also hears appeals and motions against the judgements and orders of Magistrates. The Magistrates are under the administrative control of the District Magistrate who, although he cannot entertain appeals against the judgements of the subordinate Magistrates, exercises concurrent jurisdiction with the Sessions Judge in the matter of disposal of revisional applications. There is a Sub-Divisonal Magistrate in each sub-division for the disposal of cases triable by Magistrates. He is assisted by one or more Magistrates, the number of Magistrates at each sub-division being determined by the Government in the light of number of cases registered in each sub-division. In 1958, some Magistrates were assigned exclusively judicial duties by an executive order and this separated the judiciary from the executive in the district. It has not been possible to bring about the real separation of the judiciary from the executive because that would require amendment of the Criminal Procedure Code itself which defines the duties of the District and Sub-Divisional Magistrates and the subordination of one Court to another, as also for some administrative difficulties. The Tables given on the next page indicate at a glance the numbers and types of criminal cases and civil suits handled by the District and Sessions Judge, the Subordinate Judges and

Assistant Sessions Judges, the Munsifs and the Magistrates during the years 1956 and 1960.

NATURE OF CASES HANDLED WITH THEIR NUMBERS

Nature of litigation	1956-57	1957-58	1958-59	1959-60
District & Sessions Judge				
Matrimonial Suits	—	—	—	—
Title and O.C. Suits	8	18	14	18
Miscellaneous Cases	140	39	76	46
Regular Appeals	180	113	109	256
Miscellaneous Appeals	87	97	150	203
Execution Cases	—	—	—	—
Miscellaneous Non-Judicial Cases	—	—	—	—
Sessions Cases	9	2	4	14
Criminal Appeals	61	65	60	98
Criminal Revisions	16	14	15	17
Special Court Cases	—	1	6	10
Sub-Judges & Assistant Sessions Judges				
Matrimonial Suits	—	—	—	—
Title and O.C. Suits	40	66	67	61
Money Suits	23	12	20	16
S.C.C. Suits	154	235	150	122
Rent Suits	1	2	1	1
Miscellaneous Cases	48	26	48	46
Regular Appeals	61	60	72	135
Miscellaneous Appeals	26	38	35	16
Execution Cases	84	62	60	58
Miscellaneous Non-Judicial Cases	—	—	—	—
Sessions Cases	15	14	30	45
Criminal Appeals	—	38	32	9
Criminal Revisions	—	—	—	—
Munsifs				
Matrimonial Suits	—	—	—	3
Title Suits	502	749	610	619
Money Suits	209	332	345	546
S.C.C. Suits	148	60	40	27
Rent Suits	2,328	2,412	1,539	470
Miscellaneous Cases	286	416	366	344
Regular Appeals	—	—	—	—
Miscellaneous Appeals	60	94	75	96
Execution Cases	1,957	2,075	1,538	1,497
Miscellaneous Non-Judicial Cases	—	—	—	3

Magistrates

	1957	1958	1959	1960
Murder	29	26	32	26
Dacoity	15	24	31	21
Robbery	13	14	23	20
Theft	676	735	673	628
Burglary	112	95	222	153
Rioting	109	102	89	135
All other cases	4,694	4,806	5,401	4,956

CHAPTER XII

LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT

(a) MUNICIPALITIES

Balurghat Municipality.

There are two municipal towns in the district, both of which came into existence in 1951. The Municipality of Balurghat was constituted by Notification No. M.1M-40/50(1) dated the 24th May, 1951, with the *mouzas* of Dakshin Chak Bhabāni, Bangi, Bālurghāt and Khadimpur. The approximate area of the municipality is 2.46 square miles (6.37 sq. km). In 1951 the population was 18,121 of whom 8,248 were literates. To begin with, nine Commissioners were nominated to run the municipality of whom four were officials. The Sub-Divisional Officer of Bālurghāt was the Chairman and Shri Ranjit Bose was the Vice-Chairman. The first general election of the Commissioners was held on the 10th January, 1954. Nine Commissioners were elected who held office till April, 1958, when they resigned in a body in protest against the proposal of the Government to shift the headquarters of the district from Bālurghāt to Rāiganj. The municipality was then put under the charge of an Administrator who continued to administer its affairs till the 15th May, 1960, when after the second general elections, thirteen Commissioners took charge of the municipality. The increase in the number of Commissioners was brought about by the increase in the population of the town. In 1961, the population was ascertained to be 26,999. Of these, 15,965 persons were found to be literates. With effect from the 4th October, 1962, the municipality has again been placed under an Administrator.

Out of about 18 miles (29 km) of roads only about 2 miles (3.22 km) are *pucca*. The condition of roads leaves much to be desired. There are no underground drains, nor even *pucca* open drains. There are usually *kutcha* open drains by the road-side. Underground sewerage is non-existent and night-soil is removed by scavengers. For ensuring supply of water, the municipality maintains about 152 tube-wells located at various parts of the town. Some of the main roads are lighted at night. The municipality maintains three primary schools. Conservancy and sanitation are looked after by one Sanitary Inspector, one Assistant, three Vaccinators, seventy-two scavengers and two Jamadars.

Raiganj Municipality.

The Municipality of Raiganj was constituted by Notification No. M.1M-37/51(1) dated the 19th July, 1951, with the *mouzas* of Rāiganj, Mohanbāti and Barua. The area of the town is 3.58 square miles (9.27 sq. km). In 1951 the town contained a population of 15,473 of which 5,723 were literates.

In 1961 the population was found to be 32,290 of whom 16,233 were literates. The municipality was superseded in 1959 and it is since being administered by an Administrator. The municipality maintains metalled and *kutcha* roads. Approximately 5½ miles (9 km) of tar-macadamised roads situated within the town have been constructed by the Public Works Department and are maintained by it. The total length of metalled and *kutcha* roads within the town would be approximately 28 miles (45 km).

There is no underground drainage or sewerage system. The surface drains are *kutcha*. The night-soil is removed by the municipal scavengers from the houses, and then the collected night-soil is removed to the trenching ground in carts drawn by tractors. Drinking water is provided through tube-wells and ring-wells located at a number of places of the town. The municipality maintains one free primary school and gives grants to three other primary schools. For providing these services the municipality maintains a staff consisting of (1) one Head Clerk-cum-Accountant, (2) one Tax Daroga, (3) one Cashier, (4) seven Collecting Sircars, (5) six Assistants and one Typist, (6) one Sanitary Inspector, (7) one Assistant to the Sanitary Inspector, (8) one Vaccinator, (9) two Overseers, (10) one Road Sircar, (11) seven Peons, (12) one Tube-well Mechanic, (13) three Gang Coolies, (14) fifty-two Sweepers, (15) seven Teachers and (16) two Tractor Drivers and one assistant.

The financial condition of the municipality is not very bright.

(b) THE DISTRICT BOARD

The West Dinajpur District Board was established by Government Notification No. LSG 1386/47/IB(1) dated the 29th July, 1947. At the time when the District Board was constituted, the district consisted of the police stations of Hili, Bālurghāt, Kumārganj, Tapan, Gangārāmpur, Kāliāganj, Bangshihāri, Kushmandi, Hemtābād, Rāiganj and Itāhār only. In November, 1956, parts of the district of Purneā were merged with the district of West Dinājpur. The newly added areas were constituted into the sub-division of Islāmpur. The jurisdiction of the District Board, therefore, now extends over a much wider area. The District Board functions under the provisions of the Bengal Local Self-Government Act of 1885. The main duties of the District Board are construction and maintenance of district roads, the establishment and maintenance of dispensaries, construction and maintenance of dak bungalows and sarais and the maintenance of pounds and ferries. The activities of the Board have, however, been curtailed due to the taking over of a large number of dispensaries by the State Government, but

the Board has still to run 30 charitable dispensaries. It has also to maintain approximately 805 miles (1,296 km) of non-metalled roads and 2 miles (3.22 km) of metalled roads. The District Board maintains dak bungalows at six places and inspection bungalows at ten places in the district. Fairs or *melas* cannot be held except under licences granted by the District Board. In 1959-60 the Board budgeted for a total receipt of Rs. 422,984 and a total expenditure of Rs. 374,356. The staff employed by the Board is fairly big, consisting of 175 persons.

There is no Local Board in the district.

(c) UNION BOARDS AND PANCHĀYATS

Union Boards.

There are Union Boards in seven police stations in the district. The police station of Kumārganj has been divided into eight Union Boards, that of Tapan into eleven Union Boards, that of Itāhār into eleven Union Boards, that of Hili into three Union Boards, that of Bālurghāt into nine Union Boards, that of Bangshihāri into nine Union Boards and that of Kushmandi into eight Union Boards. These Union Boards have been constituted and are functioning under the provisions of the Bengal Village Self-Government Act of 1919. Under this Act, the affairs of the Board are run by elected members who elect a President and a Vice-President. The Board has the right to levy taxes for (1) paying salaries to the Chowkidars and Dafadars and (2) carrying out welfare activities like road building, digging of wells, etc. The budget of the Union Board, therefore, consists of two parts: Part A which relates to expenditure on account of salaries of Chowkidars and Dafadars, and Part B for expenditure on account of welfare activities. The expenditure on Part A is obligatory while that on Part B is discretionary. The Chowkidars and Dafadars constitute the rural police. Chowkidars and Dafadars are also maintained under the provisions of the Bihar Chowkidari Act in the police stations of Islāmpur, Goālpokhar, Choprā and Karandighi. The tax for defraying the expenditure on salaries of Chowkidars and Dafadars is levied by the District Magistrate under the Bihar Chowkidari Act through Panchāyats appointed by him. The tax when realised is credited to the revenues of the state and the salaries of the Chowkidars and Dafadars are drawn from the Treasury against bills. There is no Part B of the budget in areas administered under the Bihar Chowkidari Act.

For the purpose of supervision, the Union Boards situated in a number of police stations are grouped together so as to form a Circle and a Circle Officer is appointed to provide guidance to the Union Boards in the management of their affairs. With the establishment of Development Blocks, the Block Development Officer in each case is also appointed

of the Circle Officer for the [illegible]
Block.

There is no Union Bench or Union Court in the district.

Panchāyats.

Grām and Anchal Panchāyats have been set up in the police stations of Gangārāmpur, Kāliāganj, Hemtābād and Rāiganj under the West Bengal Panchayat Act I of 1957. It is expected that Anchal Panchāyats will shortly be established in the police stations of Kumārganj, Tapan, Itāhār, Karandighi and Islāmpur. It is too early to comment on the functioning of the Anchal Panchāyats.

CHAPTER XIII

EDUCATION AND CULTURE

(a) HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Ancient times.

In ancient times the district was a part of the country of Puṇḍravardhana. During the reign of Chandragupta Maurya, Puṇḍravardhana was noted as a seat of study in Jaina religious doctrines. Bhadrabāhu was born in Devkoṭ in Puṇḍravardhana. After Bhadrabāhu's death different sets of doctrines grew up within the Jaina religion and two of these schools of thought within the Jaina religion came to be known as the Koṭivarshiya school and the Puṇḍravardhaniya school. Koṭivarsha has been identified with Devkoṭ which in turn has been identified with Bāngarh in Gangārāmpur police station. Puṇḍravardhana was a *bhukti* of the Gupta empire. Hence, it would not be unreasonable to suppose that the flowering the Indian culture witnessed during the reign of the Guptas did not leave Puṇḍravardhana-*bhukti* entirely unaffected. In fact, the use of Sanskrit in official documents would go to show that Sanskrit was understood by the educated. Coming down to the reign of Pāla emperors, we find Puṇḍravardhana occupying a conspicuous place in spreading the Buddhist religion. There was a Buddhist monastery at Devkoṭ which was a seat of learning in those days. In fact, Devkoṭ retained its character as a seat of learning, even after Buddhism had passed away. Sandhyākaranandi, the court poet of Rāmapāla who flourished in the eleventh century A.D., described Sonitapura or Devkoṭ as a city full of temples. Learning having been confined to Brāhmanas mostly in those days, and that also in religious instruction, the presence of so many temples in that city indicates its character as a seat of learning just as Vārānasi used to be and still is a seat of learning. An idea of the subjects that were studied by students in those days can be obtained from the Bādāl pillar inscription in which the accomplishments of Guravamisra, Prime Minister of Nārāyanapāla, and some of his ancestors have been described. Thus Devapāla's Ministers, Darbhapāni as also his grandson Kedāramisra are said to have been master of the four Vedas, while Kedāra's son Gurava is said to have had proficiency in the Vedas, Āgamas, Nīti and Jyotisha. The Bāngarh copper-plate inscription of Mahipāla I records gifts to a Brāhmana for his proficiency in *Vājasaneyi Samhitā*, Mimānsā, Vyākarana and Tarka. The subjects of study were thus entirely religious. Study of Hindu religious literature in Sanskrit continued under the Senas.

Mediaeval times.

Muhammad Bakhtyār Khalji conquered North Bengal immediately after his victory over Lakshmanasena at Nadiā. He established a military outpost at Devkoṭ, a fact which probably accounts for the modern name of Dumdumā for the place. He is said to have established *madrāsas* and *maktabs* in the conquered area. His example was emulated by some of his successors. The study of Persian assumed importance with the Muslim conquest. The use of the Persian language in all revenue transactions dating from Akbar's reign compelled everyone having interest in land to learn the Persian language. Hindus and Muslims alike, therefore, considered mastery in Persian as one of the necessary educational attainments. Although Persian had been adopted as the official language, the Muslim Sultāns of Bengal encouraged the growth of Bengali literature. By the fourteenth century A.D. *Mangalakāvyas* began to be composed in Bengali and one of the poets, Jagat Jiban Ghosal, who wrote such a poem in the seventeenth century, was born in the district of Dinājpur.

Modern times.

Francis Buchanan (Hamilton) described the state of education in the district in the nineteenth century as follows:—

"Children usually go to school at five years of age, and are instructed to read and write at the same time, which seems to be an excellent method . . . . In five or six months they are thus able to read and write. They then begin to write cyphers on palmira or plantain leaves with a reed and ink, and at the same time they learn numeration, and the subdivisions of weights and measures. The subdivisions of time belong to astronomy, or rather astrology. This occupies 18 months. They then begin . . . to learn to keep accounts, and at the same time to multiply, divide, and substract, with the rule of practice, in which the usual Indian arithmetic consists. Accounts and arithmetic are divided into two kinds, one for agricultural, and the other for commercial affairs: where both are to be learned, the former is the one usually taught first; but very few of the natives of this district ever acquire that knowledge, ... In general, the parents of this country are contented with instructing their children in mercantile accounts, ... It is only the arithmetic, commercial and agricultural, that is taught at *Páthsáls*; and the application to mensuration, and to the keeping of books, either of a merchant or land-holder, are acquired in some office or shop into which the lad enters as an assistant, and where he also learns the style and manner of correspondence. Boys are fitted for entering into an office, as assistants, when from 8 or 10 years of age, according to their industry.

"The use of the sharp iron style, for writing on bark or leaves, although the original manner of Hindú writing,

has been entirely relinquished, and a pen made of reed or bambú, and ink, introduced by Muhammedans, are universally employed, even in writing on the palmira leaf, which is still often used in works of value, as being more durable than paper.

....

"neither is the Hindústaní dialect taught in any school, nor is the Persian character usually employed to write it in any of the *Páthsáls*. The people of higher rank however commonly teach this to their children, who also learn to speak a higher style, which may be compared to the Prákrito of the Hindús, and consists almost as entirely of Arabic and Persian, as the other does of Songskrito."

About *maktabs* he wrote:

"The number of *Muktubkhanas*, or schools where Persian literature is taught, ... is very small. They are nearly as much frequented by Hindús as by Muhammedans; for the Persian language is considered as a necessary accomplishment for every gentleman, and it is absolutely necessary for those who wish to acquire a fortune in the courts of law. The number of pupils however in this district is very small, and most of the people of any rank or wealth are instructed by private tutors, who are procurable on the most moderate terms. There is reason however to fear, that their learning is not extensive, nor their taste correct; and so far as I could learn, the studies usually pursued are forms for correspondence, or processes of law, to which are added the most improbable legendary tales that can be procured. There is no school in which Arabic, or the sciences of the Muhammedans, are taught; and although some of the priests (*mullahs*) can read the portions of the *korân*, that are appropriated for certain ceremonies, I heard a general complaint from the *kázis*, that few understand a single word of that language; and that the greater part had merely learned the passages by rote, so as to enable them to perform the ceremonies."

....

"The course of study in a Hindú academy begins with the *Vyakoron* or Songskrito grammar and literature. For the first 10 years some study a grammar called *Songkhyiptosar*, said to have been composed by a Brahmin named Kromodiswro, concerning whose history the Pandits could give me no information. The study of this grammar is sometimes facilitated by the commentary of Goyichondor. Others again study a grammar called *Kolop*, said to have been composed by Sorbo Borma, who was contemporary with Salivahana. This grammar seems to be nearly as obscure and unscientific as the former, for its study usually occupies 10 years.

although persevering students sometimes are masters of it in eight. Others study a grammar called *Mugdhobodh*, written by Vopodev, a Brahmin of the five tribes introduced by Adisur into Bengal, and therefore a modern author. Those who use this grammar study two commentaries, one called *Gon*, written also by Vopodev, and another written by a Brahmin Ram Torko Vagis. This system is probably much more rational than the others, as youths require only from three to five years for its study. Finally, other masters use a grammar equally easy, called *Saroswot*, and composed by Onobhyut Acharyo of Varanosi (Benaras). These also use the commentary of Govindo called *Podochondrika*, and that of Ramkrishno, called *Podmokumari*.

" . . . . They then begin to learn the meaning of the words in an *Obhidhán*. So far as I can learn, an *Obhidhán* is rather a vocabulary than a dictionary; and the natives have not yet adopted the alphabetical arrangement of their words to facilitate the study of their language. The only vocabulary used in Dinajpur is the *Omorkosh* of Omorsingho, whom the Pandits here, as usual, consider as a person belonging to the sect of Buddha, who flourished at the court of Vikrom. The study of this occupies only one year, and is sometimes assisted by the commentary of a physician named Bhorot Mollick, and at others by the commentary of Ray Mukut, which by its prolixity lengthens the time of study for 6 months.

"The students now are qualified to begin the poets, and the work usually chosen to form their tase (taste ?) is that called *Bhotti*, which is said to consist of extracts from the *Ramayon* of Valmiki, made by Bhortrihori, brother of Vikrom. A year is employed in reading this work, which according to the Pandits who use it, is so excellent and sublime, that every other poem appears flat, and is unnecessary: but others, among whom is the Raja's Purohit, prefer two poems of Kalidas, named *Roghu* and *Kumar Sombhu* . . . . Sri Chundro, a brother of the Raja's Purohit, although a professor of law, seems to extend the study of the poets more than usual, and beside the common extracts from the work of Valmiki, he reads with his pupils another history of Ram called *Natok* . . . . . . Other professors of law are less indulgent, and proceed to that dry study immediately after their pupils have read the *Omorkosh*. The pupils are now considered as completely instructed in the *Vyakoron*, or Songskrito grammar, and may peruse whatever of the classical authors in that language they can venture to read. In Dinajpur, no person except Brahmins are instructed in the *Vyakoron*; but in some parts of Bengal, the Baidyos,

or medical tribe, and even some rich Kayosthos are permitted to study such portions of this science, as have been composed by mere men ; but whatever is supposed to have been delivered by Munís, or by gods, is concealed from their profane eyes. Some Kayosthos have, however, had the audacity to lay open the veil, and have even translated part of the works of Vyás into the Prakrito language ; but this is held to have been highly unjustifiable. Some Brahmins, however, justify the action ; not from their alleging that a Kayostho should read the work of a Muni, but because the works that have been translated are not in reality the composition of Vyas.

"Persons who are desirous of extending their knowledge to the study of the law (*Smriti*), after such a course of *Vyakoron*, are qualified to begin with the works of Roghunondon, a Brahmin of Nodiya, whose great-grandson is said to be still alive. His works are said to be very voluminous, and to consist of 28 books. Of those however eight only are usually studied in this district, and these require five years of constant application. They are as follows:

1. *Tithi Tottwo*, which treats of the laws to be observed in the performance of ceremonies at new moons and eclipses.
2. *Prayoschitto Tottwo*, concerning the ceremonies which ought to be performed for the remission of sin.
3. *Dayo Tottwo*, concerning succession to property.
4. *Molomas Tottwo*, concerning what is to be done or omitted during the intercalary month of the lunar year.
5. *Suddhi Tottwo*, concerning what is to be eaten on certain days, especially those of mourning.
6. *Udbaho Tottwo*, concerning marriage.
7. *Ahnik Tottwo*, concerning the rules for prayer.
8. *Sraddho Tottwo*, concerning what is to be done in commemoration of deceased parents.

"After this course of law one Pandit reads with his pupils one of the 18 *Purans* called *Sribhagvot*, as containing an useful illustration of the dry precepts of Roghunondon. . . . . In this school men have usually finished their education in the law by the time that they are thirty years of age. Some of the Pandits however, in place of this flight to poetical regions, after having finished the usual eight books of Roghunondon, teach the *Prachin Smriti*, composed by Sulpani, a Brahmin of Yosor (Jessore), which treats of the same subject with the 2nd book of Roghunondon. They then give their pupils the *Sraddho Chintomoni*, a

work of Vachospoti Misro, a Maithilo Brahmin, which treats on the laws for performing funeral ceremonies.

"Grammar (*Vyakoron*) is a necessary preliminary to all science, but many proceed to study metaphysics or philosophy without attending to law, and many on the contrary study law without a previous knowledge of that important branch of knowledge. Metaphysics of the *Nyayo Sastro* are the glory of the Pandits of Bengal, and are no where in India so much studied . . . . The most ancient work on this subject now remaining, according to the Pandits of this place, is a treatise called *Chintamoni*, said to have been written by a Maithilo Brahmin; but it is so obscure and difficult, that few are able to comprehend its meaning. The works most usually studied have been composed in modern times, ...

". . . . . The greater part however pursue their studies for 12 or 14 years more, reading a great variety of books, ...

"These three sciences, Grammar, Law, and Metaphysics, are considered as the noblest; and are the only knowledge which the Odhyapoks of Bengal will condescend to teach in their *Chauvaris*; and of those the study of Metaphysics is considered as by far the most honourable, and next to that is the study of the law."

Beginnings of western education.

Thus even by 1810 no English school had been established in the district which came under the control of the East India Company in 1765. In 1856-57 there were 1 English school and 8 vernacular schools maintained by the Government in the old district of Dinājpur. Besides these 9 schools, there was in 1856-57 another vernacular school which used to receive financial aid from the Government. In 1870-71 the number of English schools maintained by the Government was 1 and the number of vernacular schools was 8. The number of aided schools, however, increased considerably. In 1870-71 there were 4 English and 215 vernacular schools in the old district of Dinājpur which used to receive financial assistance from the Government. Besides these schools there were 18 girls' schools and 1 training school which also used to receive financial aid from the Government. In 1872 Sir George Campbell's scheme for the spread of primary education was initiated. Hitherto Government had not spent anything for the spread of primary education. With the initiation of the scheme of Sir George Campbell, the *gurus* or village schoolmasters who had till then imparted primary education to the children, became eligible to receive financial aid not exceeding Rs. 5 per month each from the Government, subject to the condition that the instruction was to be imparted entirely in the vernacular and that the work of the *pāthsālā* would be open to inspection. Under Sir George Campbell's scheme the expenditure for giving financial help

to the *gurus* was to be met out of the provincial revenues, no extra cess or tax being levied to meet this additional expenditure. It should also be noted that in this scheme there was no provision for the appointment of primary school teachers by the Government or by any local authority.

Primary education received a further impetus by the enactment of the Bengal (Rural) Primary Education Act of 1930 (Bengal Act 7 of 1930). Under this Act a Central Primary Education Committee was constituted for the purpose of advising the Government on all matters referred to in the Bengal (Rural) Primary Education Act. This Act also constituted the District School Boards (i) to prepare and maintain a register showing all primary schools within the district, together with the teachers thereof and their qualifications, and the accommodation available therein ; (ii) to tabulate such further information and to prepare such plans or maps as might be necessary to enable the School Board to frame an estimate of the existing provision for primary education and of the further provision necessary to place primary education within the reach of all children ; (iii) to prepare in the prescribed manner schemes for the extension of primary education within the area under the authority of each Union Board, or Union Committee, or Panchāyat ; (iv) to maintain all primary schools under public management in the district, except primary schools maintained by the Union Boards under the control of the School Board ; and (v) subject to the prescribed conditions, to appoint and fix and pay the salaries of teachers in primary schools. The duties of these District School Boards listed in Section 23 of the Bengal (Rural) Primary Education Act of 1930 are fourteen in number out of which only five have been specifically mentioned here. Under this Act all immovable property on which the road and public works cesses are assessed according to the provisions of the Cess Act, 1880, became liable to the payment of a primary education cess. Incomes from trade, businesses or professions carried on in the rural areas were also made liable to the payment of a primary education tax. In Chapter V of the Act it was prescribed that in addition to the sums which might be appropriated from the State revenues in any year for purposes of primary education, the State Government should every year provide a sum of twenty-three lakhs and fifty thousand rupees for expenditure on primary education in rural areas. Primary education is now being imparted in the district in accordance with the provisions of this Bengal (Rural) Primary Education Act of 1930.

So far as higher education is concerned, there is no high school in the district which is maintained exclusively from Government funds. All the existing schools receive financial aids, both recurring and non-recurring, from the Government. Of the two degree colleges that now exist in the district, one,

viz., Balurghat College is a "sponsored college" so that the Government supplements the income from fees paid by the students in order that the college might be run in accordance with the rules and regulations prescribed by the Government; the other, viz., Raiganj College receives grants from the Government.

[For history of fine arts, the Chapter on History may be seen.]

(b) LITERACY AND EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS

It is not possible to review the progress made in literacy and education for the district as it is constituted now, as figures for the same area are not available from the past Censuses. It is, however, possible to review the progress made in this field in the sub-divisions of Bālurghāt and Rāiganj which constituted the district of West Dinājpur in 1951. The old district of West Dinājpur in 1951 had a population of 720,573 persons of whom 383,853 were males and 336,720 females. The total number of literates was 106,127 of whom 83,791 were males and 22,336 females. The Census of 1961 disclosed a population of 944,771 persons for the same area. The number of males was 493,035 and the number of females 451,736. The total number of literates was 183,249. The number of male literates was 142,676 and the number of female literates 40,573. The population of this area thus increased by 31.1 per cent. As compared with 14.7 per cent of the population who were literates in 1951, 19.4 per cent of the population were found to be literates in 1961. Literacy thus increased by 4.7 per cent in the decade 1951-61. During the same period, the percentage of literacy among males increased from 21.8 to 28.9 while that of female literates increased from 6.6 to 9.

This subject of progress in literacy, if viewed from another aspect, discloses a brighter state of affairs. Thus against an increase of 31.1 per cent in the population, the number of literates increased by 72.7 per cent. The increase in the number of male literates was 70.3 per cent while the increase in the number of female literates was 81.6 per cent. Had the population during this decade increased at the same rate as in the decade 1941-51, then the percentage of literates in the population would have been much higher than 19.4.

As against 4,867 persons who possessed educational qualifications equivalent to Matriculation and above in 1951, there were 11,429 persons who possessed such educational qualifications in 1961. The number of such persons thus increased by 134.8 per cent. Similarly, for 4,246 males having educational qualifications equivalent to Matriculation and above in 1951, there were 10,538 such males in 1961. The percentage increase is 148.2. Even for females the percentage

increase has been 43.5 which is higher than the percentage increase in population.

In the district as a whole there were 225,827 literates in 1961 of whom 12,924 possessed qualifications equivalent to Matriculation and above. The number of male literates was 180,238, while the number of female literates was 45,589. The number of males possessing qualifications equivalent to Matriculation and above was 11,983, while the number of such females was only 941. The literates form 17.1 per cent of the population. The male literates formed 26 per cent of the male population, while the female literates formed 7.2 per cent of the female population. The literates can be classified as (1) simple literates who do not possess any educational qualifications, that is, those who can write a letter and also can read a letter and understand its meaning, (2) those who have passed primary or junior basic examination and (3) those who have passed the Matriculation or higher examinations. According to this classification, the number of simple literates was 138,109 of whom 110,004 were males and 28,105 females. There were 74,794 persons who had passed primary or junior basic examination, 58,251 of whom were males and 16,543 females. The number of persons who passed the Matriculation or higher examinations was 12,924, 11,983 of whom, as already stated, were males and 941 females. Expressed in terms of percentages, mere literates formed 10.43 per cent of the population and the persons who had passed the primary or junior basic examination formed 5.65 per cent. One would have expected that the percentage of literacy in the age group 5-14 years would have been higher than among the population as a whole but such was not the case. Only 17.43 per cent of the population in the age group 5-14 years were found to be literates. 23.52 per cent of the boys between 5-14 years of age were literates while the corresponding figure for girls of the same age group was 10.77 per cent.

The number of literates and educated persons was higher among the urban population than among the rural population. In the towns of Bālurghāt, Hili, Gangārāmpur, Rāiganj, Kāliāganj and Islāmpur taken as a whole mere literates formed 20.67 per cent of the population. The corresponding figure for the rural area of the district was only 9.6 per cent. Similarly, the persons who have passed the primary or junior basic examination formed 21.23 per cent of the population in the urban sector as compared with 4.4 per cent in the rural sector. In the urban sector, 24.26 per cent of the boys and girls in the age group 5-14 years were mere literates as compared with 10.69 per cent in the rural sector. The percentage of boys and girls in the urban sector in the age group 5-14 years who had passed the primary or junior basic examination was 24.16 as compared with 3.88 in the rural sector. 45.47 per cent of those who were at least Matriculates resided in the towns. Women constituted 7.28 per

cent of those who were at least Matriculates, for the district as a whole. In the rural sector, 3.53 per cent of those who were at least Matriculates were women. In the urban sector, this percentage stood at 11.77.

(c) GENERAL EDUCATION

There were 6 high schools in the district in 1947, immediately after it came into being. Of these, the Balurghat High School was affiliated to Calcutta University in 1910. The Raiganj Coronation High School was affiliated to Calcutta University in 1917, the Harirampur A.S.D.M. High School and the Kaliaganj P.S. High School in 1941 and the Patiram High School in 1947. There were also 31 middle schools teaching up to Class VI, 551 primary schools, 1 tol and 11 junior madrasas. There was no high school for girls in the district, nor was there any training institution. Of the 31 middle schools only 2 were for girls, one of which was located at Bālurghāt and the other at Rāiganj. Of the 11 madrasas, 2 imparted only religious instruction. In 1956-57, after the addition of some areas from the district of Purneā and the consequent creation of the Islāmpur sub-division, there were 8 higher secondary schools having 3,854 students, 16 high schools having 4,135 students, 73 junior high schools with the roll-strength of 4,322, 26 junior basic schools with a combined roll-strength of 2,208, 949 other primary schools with the total enrolment of 73,152, 4 tols with a total roll-strength of 56, 6 madrasas with a total roll-strength of 295, and 2 orphanages. In 1960-61, the number of higher secondary schools was raised to 10, there being 2 higher secondary schools exclusively for girls. The total roll-strength of these 10 higher secondary schools consisted of 4,226 boys and 1,501 girls. The number of high schools increased to 27, there being 4 schools exclusively for girls. The roll-strength consisted of 5,893 boys and 1,748 girls. The number of junior high schools teaching up to Class VIII was 29. There was no school of this category meant exclusively for girls. The combined roll-strength stood at 3,173 boys. There were 61 2-class junior high schools teaching up to Class VI only. These schools may be compared with the middle schools of 1947. One of these schools was for girls only. The combined roll-strength was 2,525 boys and 484 girls. The number of senior basic schools for boys only was 3 with a roll-strength of 94 boys and 6 girls. There were 69 junior basic schools for boys only, having 4,586 boys and 1,744 girls on the rolls. The number of primary schools reached the impressive figure of 1,067, 3 such schools being meant exclusively for girls. The total roll-strength was 55,294 boys and 23,494 girls. There were only 3 tols and 7 madrasas and 2 orphanages. A junior basic training college and a primary teachers' training school had also been established.

Primary and basic and secondary schools.

Colleges.

As the only College in the undivided district of Dinājpur was situated in that part of the district which has become a part of East Pakistan, 2 new Colleges had to be established, one at Bālurghāt and the other at Rāiganj for providing facilities for higher education to the young men of the district. The Balurghat College was opened in September, 1948, as an Intermediate Arts College, and was given affiliation for the I.Sc. course in 1950. It then became affiliated up to the B.A. and B.Sc. standard of Calcutta University. The Raiganj College was opened in August, 1948 and received affiliation from Calcutta University for teaching up to the I.A. Examination in Arts only from 1948-49. At present, it is affiliated for both the I.Sc. and B.A. standard. The only difficulty in regard to the successful functioning of these two colleges has been the persistent dearth of qualified lecturers and professors who seem to be unwilling to serve in the district of West Dinājpur. Balurghat College comes under the "sponsored colleges" scheme of the Government, while Raiganj College gets grants from the Government. The professors and lecturers are paid salaries prescribed by the University and the Government, and fees are realized from students at rates approved by the Government. Recently with the establishment of the University of North Bengal, both the colleges have become affiliated to it.

There is no Government school or college in the district.

With the attainment of independence, no basic change can be said to have taken place in the educational policy pursued by the Government, but the financial help given to private institutions has increased. The cost of primary education is now met almost entirely by the State. In rural areas, girls can attend educational institutions and study up to Class VIII without paying any fees. The loss of income of the schools on this score is made good by the Government. The State aid to private institutions has been many-sided, and grants have been given for construction of buildings, for the purchase of furniture and equipment, for the purchase of library books and for maintenance. The expenditure on school education of all categories in the district was Rs. 3,619,116 in 1957-58, Rs. 3,885,840 in 1958-59, Rs. 4,737,939 in 1959-60 and Rs. 4,783,833 in 1960-61. Of these amounts, Rs. 1,017,616 were spent on indirect aid in 1957-58, Rs. 1,069,823 in 1958-59, Rs. 1,376,437 in 1959-60 and Rs. 1,013,024 in 1960-61. Direct expenditure includes all kinds of recurring expenditure, and indirect expenditure includes non-recurring expenditure on the construction of buildings, etc. Primary education in the district is the responsibility of the District School Board, but as its funds are most inadequate in meeting the expenditure in connection with primary education, almost the whole of the expenditure is met indirectly by the State in the shape of annual grants to the District School Board. The cost of primary education is supposed to be raised through

the education tax, but there being no proper collecting agency, the amount collected is almost negligible.

(d) ADULT LITERACY AND SOCIAL EDUCATION

Between 1952 and 1955 social education in the district used to be looked after by the District Inspector of Schools with the help of one Circle Assistant for Social Education. In 1955-56 the Social Education Section was detached from the Office of the District Inspector of Schools and was placed under a District Social Education Officer of gazetted rank.

Social education activities consist of (1) the establishment of night schools for adults, (2) preventing literates from lapsing into illiteracy by arranging supply of books through the District Library and its affiliated libraries and the 'library centres', (3) the organisation of recreational activities for adults, like *jātrās*, *kabigāns* and folk songs. In 1949-50 there were 22 social education centres and 10 night schools in the district. There were arrangements for teaching adults to become literates in some of the social education centres, the main activity of which centred round adult literacy through *jātrās* and other recreational activities. This policy is being pursued vigorously and by 1960-61 the number of social education centres in the district increased to 139 and those of night schools to 234. In 1960-61 the Government spent Rs. 381,041 on these institutions, the people contributing an additional amount of Rs. 56,655.

(e) LIBRARIES

The District Library at Bālurghāt was established in 1954. It is controlled by the District Library Association, of the Council and the Executive Committee of which the District Magistrate is the President and the District Social Education Officer the Secretary. There are also non-official members in the Executive Committee. The Committee is composed of the following members:

(1) President—The District Magistrate (*ex officio*).

(2) Vice-President—Elected by the Library Council at its annual meeting from amongst its life members.

(3) Secretary—District Social Education Officer & Secretary, District Library Association (*ex officio*).

(4) Joint Secretary—Librarian, District Library (*ex officio*).

(5) Treasurer—One of the Sub-Divisional Officers nominated by the District Magistrate.

(6) District Inspector of Schools (*ex officio*).

(7) District Inspectress of Schools (*ex officio*).

(8) President, District School Board (*ex officio*).

(9-10) Two members nominated by the President in rotation from amongst the members of recognized 'A' class libraries.

(11-12) Two members nominated by the President in rotation from amongst the members of recognized 'B' class libraries.

(13-14) Two members nominated by the President from amongst the members of recognized 'C' class libraries.

(15-17) Not more than three members who are likely to promote the library movement in the district, nominated by the President after the first meeting of the Executive Committee. There are more than 7,715 books in the Library, the annual expenditure being Rs. 20,000. The Government have also sponsored 28 'rural libraries'. In every sponsored library there is a Librarian and a Cycle Peon whose salaries are paid out of the grant received from the State. Each of these 28 libraries receive Rs. 1,980 per year as Government grant. There are also 18 public libraries none of which receives Government grant regularly. There are 53 library centres which keep books for neo-literates. The Government grants to these centres are not regular. The Government-sponsored rural libraries are linked with the District Library from which they receive books. They in their turn supply books to member-libraries which are small village libraries and pay an annual subscription of Rs. 5 for the benefit of borrowing books from the District Library through the sponsored rural libraries.

(f) PHYSICAL EDUCATION

A District Youth Welfare Council was constituted in 1939 for the undivided district of Dinājpur. The District Organiser of Physical Education, Jalpaiguri, was the Secretary of the Council and was in charge of the physical education and youth welfare activities in the district. After Independence and the constitution of the new district of West Dinājpur, the District Organiser of Physical Education of Māldā supervised the physical education in schools and clubs. In 1956 a whole-time Organiser of Physical Education was appointed for the district. The District Organiser of Physical Education was attached to the Office of the District Inspector of Schools of West Dinājpur. A new post of District Officer for Physical Education and Youth Welfare was created in 1957 and a District Officer for Physical Education and Youth Welfare was appointed in 1958. The District Organiser of Physical Education was placed under the District Officer for Physical Education and Youth Welfare. Physical training classes have been included in the routine for every primary and junior basic school. These physical training classes are generally conducted by teachers who have been trained in basic training colleges or primary training schools where physical training

forms a part of their training. Arrangements for short-course physical training for primary school teachers have also been made. Annual athletic sports have been introduced in the primary schools in all the *thanas* of the district since 1956. The District School Board sanctions a considerable amount of money towards prizes. Physical education in junior high and secondary schools and colleges is also not neglected. The average annual expenditure incurred in non-recurring grants to schools for the purchase of sports equipments between 1956-57 and 1960-61 was Rs. 1,100. In 1960-61 Rs. 13,860 were spent in helping those institutions which had no playing fields, to acquire them. The District Magistrate is the President of the Youth Welfare Council and the District Officer for Physical Education is its *ex officio* Secretary. The members include the Sub-Divisional Officers, the Chairman of the District Board, two members of the Legislative Assembly, the Secretary of the District Sports Association, one representative of local Inter-School Sports Association, the heads of two educational institutions, the District Inspector of Schools, the District Inspectress of Schools, Jalpaiguri, the District Social Education Officer, the District Development Officer, a registered medical practitioner and three nominated local gentlemen. There are 48 youth clubs recognised by the Council. These youth clubs receive some grants from the Government for purchase of apparatus, etc.

The District Scouts and Guides Association have been working since 1953.

TABLE

LITERACY AND EDUCATION IN 1961

	Rural			Urban			Rural-cum-Urban		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Mere literates	98,393	19,262	117,655	11,611	8,843	20,454	110,004	28,105	138,109
Those who passed the Primary or Junior Basic examination	44,982	8,802	53,784	13,269	7,741	21,010	58,251	16,543	74,794
Those who passed the Matriculation or higher examinations	6,798	249	7,047	5,185	692	5,877	11,983	941	12,924
Total Literates: (including educated persons)	150,173	28,313	178,486	30,065	17,276	47,341	180,238	45,589	225,827

Source: Office of the Superintendent of Census Operations, West Bengal.

CHAPTER XIV

MEDICAL AND PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICES

(a) SURVEY OF PUBLIC HEALTH AND MEDICAL FACILITIES IN EARLY TIMES

The information available on the state of public health and medical facilities in the district of West Dinājpur in early times is extremely meagre. It is not unlikely that in the court of the Rājā of Dinājpur there was a physician, but his duty must have been confined to looking after the health of the Rājā and the members of his family. There is no evidence to show that there was a hierarchy of medical officers stationed at convenient places in the district to look after the health of the public in general and extend to them medical facilities. On the other hand, it would be also wrong to suppose that people, when they fell ill, could not get any kind of medical treatment for there must have been physicians practising the Ayurvedic or Unani system of medicine. The earliest reference to the appointment of a medical officer for the district of undivided Dinājpur that we come across is in regard to the appointment of a Medical Assistant at Dinājpur. On the 18th July, 1786, Mr. George Hatch, the then Collector of Dinājpur, wrote to the President and the Board of Revenue asking for the appointment of a Medical Assistant to be stationed at Dinājpur for affording casual relief to the Europeans. The gentleman who was appointed surgeon to the district was a Mr. Ross on a salary of Rs. 300 per month plus Rs. 90 as house rent allowance. It is interesting to note that Mr. James Ross was appointed as surgeon in the district of Dinājpur due to his thorough knowledge of the constitution of the then Collector, derived from a constant and successful treatment of his complaint. The Collector in recommending Mr. Ross's name for appointment also said that he was indebted to Mr. Ross's skill for his recovery from a very dangerous fit of sickness. The Office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health owes its origin to this post of Surgeon of a district. It thus appears that even towards the end of the nineteenth century public health and medical facilities were not much different than those that existed before the British occupation of Bengal.

The district of West Dinājpur has been formed out of the old district of Dinājpur, to which a portion from the district of Purneā has been added. It would not be wrong, therefore, to reproduce here what Major Sherwill, the Revenue Surveyor, said about the climate of the district in 1863. According to him,

"The climate, however, is very unhealthy, and is justly

held in great dislike by strangers, including Bengalees, on account of its insalubrity. When the 2nd Division, Revenue Survey, was ordered from Burdwan into Dinagepore, many of the oldest and best Native Bengalee Surveyors resigned, rather than face the dangers of so dreaded a climate. In the seasons of 1857-58 and 1858-59, this survey was nearly disorganized by sickness. As many as thirteen surveying parties were unfit for work at the same time, and almost all were sick and weakly from the effects of fever, which is the prevailing epidemic. The villagers have a sickly appearance, and many are annually carried off by fever and cholera. Natives are more easily affected by the climate than Europeans, which is probably attributable to the freer mode of living of the latter, which enables them the better to withstand its baneful effects, also to the greater exposure of Natives to the night air."

This unhealthiness was to a great extent attributable to malaria. Major Rogers of the Indian Medical Service, who was selected by the Government in 1904 to make a special enquiry into the causes of the prevalence of fevers in the Dinājpur district, found that the most usual type of fever was the malignant tertian, common to Calcutta and most parts of India. He also found the quartan type, which was said to have been most common in the Duars, and which was usually of a chronic nature, and terminated fatally after several months of sickness. According to this authority, the districts of Rangpur and Dinājpur were the home of the terrible *kālā-āzār* of Assam. During the course of his enquiry in 1904, he found traces of this disease, which was characterised by a great enlargement of the spleen, accompanied by general wasting and darkening of the skin, still surviving in the district. Other common types of fever were simple, tertian, quotidian, and remittent. This unhealthiness of the district in the beginning of the twentieth century is also reflected in the population figures. The population of a district increases due to the excess of births over deaths, and due to emigration and immigration. It is seen that the percentage variations in the population between 1901 and 1961 were as follows:

Year	Persons	Decennial variation	Decennial variation percentage
1901	741,284		
1911	791,512	+50,228	+6.78
1921	695,536	−95,976	−12.13
1931	745,821	+50,285	+7.23
1941	834,726	+88,905	+11.92
1951	976,882	+142,156	+17.03
1961	1,323,797	+346,915	+35.51

The figures in the Table on the last page relate to the present boundaries of the district. It would be seen that the population was found to increase by only 6.78 per cent in 1911 over the population of 1901, thus giving a mean annual rate of 0.68 per cent only. During the decade 1921-31 this mean rate of increase was only 0.72 per cent, not much different from the mean rate in the decade 1901-1911, while on account of the influenza epidemic which spread in the country at the end of the First World War, the decade 1911-1921 actually witnessed a decrease of the order of 12.13 per cent. Even in times as recent as 1931-41 the mean rate of increase was only 1.20 per cent per year. The comparatively large increase noticed during the decade 1941-51 may be ascribed to a great extent to the large scale immigration into the district of persons who had overnight become citizens of a foreign State on the 15th August, 1947. The remarkable increase during the decade 1951-61 reflects the result of the various public health measures undertaken by the Government. Malaria which was responsible for the unhealthiness of the district and was responsible for the majority of untimely deaths, has almost been eradicated. Deaths from cholera and small-pox have been reduced. Another cause which used to account for many lives has also received a serious setback. Death at child-birth has been reduced. During the decade 1951-61, 159,907 persons came to reside in the district, i.e., the number of immigrants was 159,907. Assuming a constant growth rate of 1.4 per cent in geometrical progression, the 1961 population should have been equal to 1,295,715, which is less than the observed population by 28,082. This difference is equal to 2.9 per cent of the 1951 population. In making the calculations, 1/10th of the immigrants in the decade 1951-61, have been assumed to have arrived every year and to have contributed to the increase of population.

(b) VITAL STATISTICS

Between 1950-1959 the mean birth-rate was 25.7 per mille, while the mean death-rate was 12.8 per mille, according to the Deputy Director of Health Services (Vital Statistics), West Bengal. The difference is only 12.9 per mille, i.e., a rate of natural growth of only 1.3 per cent. The observed rate of growth between the two Censuses of 1951 and 1961 is much more than what should have been observed on the basis of the vital statistics. The disparity between the two figures merely underlines the well-known fact that in our country the registration of neither births nor deaths is complete.

The major diseases leading to mortality are malaria, small-pox, cholera, dysentery, tuberculosis, etc., etc. Snake-bites also cause some deaths. But the largest single factor in the mortality rate of the district is maternal deaths at child-birth.

(c) MEDICAL AND PUBLIC HEALTH FACILITIES

The position in 1947

In 1947 there were only two hospitals, one 12-bedded at Bālurghāt and another 20-bedded at Rāiganj. These two were maintained by the Government and their activities were supplemented by a number of District Board dispensaries. Previously the preventive side of medicine used to be the responsibility of the District Board which used to arrange for inoculation against cholera and vaccination against small-pox by its Sanitary Inspectors. The situation has now completely changed, and both the preventive and curative side of medicine are administered by the Chief Medical Officer of Health who is appointed by the Government. He has got a District Health Officer, Sub-Divisional Health Officers, Health Assistants and Sanitary Inspectors for looking after the preventive side of medicine. These Officers inoculate people against cholera and vaccinate them against small-pox. The inoculations and vaccinations are generally intensified in those areas where cholera and small-pox cases come to notice. The preventive side is looked after by the District Health Officer and the Sub-Divisional Health Officers. The new General Hospital at Bālurghāt can accommodate 136 patients. 20 beds are reserved for T.B. patients. This hospital was opened in a new building in November, 1960. A new building has been constructed for the Raiganj Hospital. It has now 58 indoor beds. In the Islāmpur sub-division there are Health Centres in the police stations of Choprā, Islāmpur, Goālpokhar and Karandighi, there being 2 Subsidiary Health Centres in Islāmpur police station, 2 in Goālpokhar police station, 2 in Choprā police station and 1 in Karandighi police station. There used to be another Subsidiary Health Centre in Karandighi police station, but it has gone out of existence. Another Subsidiary Health Centre has been established in its place. In Rāiganj sub-division there are Health Centres in all the police stations except the police stations of Kushmandi and Bangshihāri. There are 2 Subsidiary Health Centres in Hemtābād police station, 5 in Rāiganj police station, 2 in Kāliāganj police station and 3 in Itāhār police station. In the Bālurghāt Sadar sub-division there are Subsidiary Health Centres in all the police stations. There are 3 in Bālurghāt police station, 3 in Gangārāmpur police station, 2 in Hili police station, 1 in Kumārganj police station and 1 in Tapan police station. Construction of a Subsidiary Health Centre at Manahali in Tapan police station has been completed. The district is thus fairly well served by hospitals and health centres.

The present position.

Public health service.

Hospitals and Health Centres.

The Health Survey & Development Committee (Bhore Committee) in their elaborate report (1946) recommended that there should ultimately be a Primary Health Centre with 75 beds for every 20,000 people, but that, in view of the insufficiency of funds and of trained personnel, during the first

ten years, a Primary Health Centre should cover 40,000 people and should have only 2 beds for maternity and 2 for emergency cases. In partial modification of these recommendations, the Government of West Bengal began to establish rural hospitals known as Health Centres from 1948. The idea was to have at least one Health Centre in every Union Board having 10 or 4 indoor beds. The Union Health Centres in a *thana* were to be affiliated to the Thana Health Centre having 50 beds or at least a minimum of 20 beds. All the Health Centres in a sub-division were to be affiliated with the Sub-Divisional Hospital having 68 indoor beds. The scheme envisaged contributions from the people in the shape of land and cash donations for the establishment of each type of Health Centre. The conditions for the establishment of a Union Health Centre were that the local people should donate 6 *bighās* of land together with some amount of cash contribution. For the establishment of a Thana Health Centre, the conditions were donation of 20 *bighās* of land and some contribution in cash. This scheme remained in operation till the year 1955 when, at the instance of the Government of India, it was decided to have a Primary Health Centre with 10 beds at the head quarters of every N.E.S. Block (Development Block), with 2 or 3 Subsidiary Health Centres located at suitable places within the Block area. These Subsidiary Health Centres were to be in the nature of dispensaries only, as there was to be no provision for indoor beds except for 2 non-dieted emergency beds. The district, therefore, contains both the types of Health Centres. The contributions made by the people to the establishment of Health Centres in the district amount to 75.07 acres (30.40 ha) of land and Rs. 50,000 in cash. The Chief Medical Officer of Health looks after the proper functioning of these Health Centres. The District Medical Officer looks after the District Hospital, and the Sub-Divisional Medical Officer at Rāiganj looks after the Sub-Divisional Hospital there. There is an Assistant Chief Medical Officer of Health who assists the Chief Medical Officer in discharging his duties.

With the appointment of a School Medical Officer in 1961, school hygiene work has been taken up. The Medical Officers of Health Centres visit the schools within their jurisdictions. 4 Family Planning Centres have also been opened in the district, to advise on limitation of family size. One such Centre is located in each of the municipal towns of Bālurghāt and Rāiganj. The remaining two are located at Kāliāganj and Itāhār respectively.

There is a leprosy clinic at Rāiganj.

Besides the hospitals and health centres maintained by the Government, there are about 30 dispensaries maintained by the District Board. The catholic missionaries maintain the charitable dispensary at Rājibpur in Gangārāmpur police station. It is known as St. Joseph Charitable Dispensary and

was started in 1930. On an average 380 patients are treated in the dispensary per day. A nominal charge of 6 nP. is realised from each patient.

Diseases common to the district.—Preventive measures against them.—Mortality from them.

The diseases common to the district are malaria, cholera, chicken-pox and small-pox, typhoid, diarrhoea, dysentery and tuberculosis. Cholera, small-pox and chicken-pox are seasonal in nature. Cholera breaks out usually at the beginning of the summer and the beginning of the rain, while chicken-pox and small-pox cases are usually come across at the end of the winter. Whenever outbreaks of these diseases are reported from any quarters, preventive measures like inoculations and vaccinations, disinfections, etc., are intensified and treatment of patients arranged, if necessary by Mobile Medical Units. The number of deaths from these diseases varies from year to year. Thus the death rate from cholera varied from 1.4 per mille in 1950 to 0.002 in 1959. Between 1950 and 1959, the death-rate from small-pox fluctuated between 1.4 per mille and 0.1 per mille, the peak and minimum years being 1951 and 1954. Chicken-pox usually does not result in death. In 1959 dysentery accounted for 0.3 deaths per mille while tuberculosis accounted for 0.2 per mille. The death-rate at child-birth was 6.8 per mille. Other diseases combined accounted for as much as 8.8 per mille in 1959.

Maternal mortality.

Control measures for malaria.

Before the introduction of control measures for malaria, the death-rate from malaria varied between 2.3 and 4.2 per mille per year. The Government of West Bengal agreed to participate in the scheme for control of malaria, sponsored by the Government of India with the assistance of the United States Technical Co-operation Mission (now the United States Agency for International Development), and as a result one Malaria Control Unit covering West Dinājpur was established in 1953. There were some initial difficulties in implementing the scheme, but from the years 1954-55 two rounds of spraying of D.D.T. were being done each year. The first round of D.D.T. spraying starts from the middle of May and the second round starts from the middle of August. The object is to kill all the larvae of that particular type of mosquito which acts as the carrier of malaria. Since 1958-59 the control programme has been converted into an eradication programme. The plan of operation of the eradication programme consists of:—

(i) Intensification of indoor residual spraying in both malarious areas as well as areas of low malaria incidence during the next three years to achieve interruption of transmission of malaria by anopheles mosquitoes and thereby reduce the number of malaria cases to a minimum level.

(ii) Elimination of the residual malaria infection in man by radical treatment of parasite positive cases detected

in the hospitals and dispensaries as well as by house to house visits by the malaria surveillance staff.

(iii) Surveillance operation—

When reduction of the reservoir of residual infection detected by surveillance operation reaches either zero or at least a level so low (viz., occurrence of 0.5 malaria cases per thousand population per year) that the endemicity cannot be re-established, then only spraying operation can be withdrawn. Surveillance will, however, continue for the next two years.

Surveillance phase can be terminated only if there is no new indigenous case after three years of surveillance.

The results have been most encouraging and the death-rate from malaria came down in 1959 to 0.4 per mille.

Placing patients suffering from malaria under surveillance commenced in October, 1961.

The malaria eradication programme is being implemented by the following staff:

WEST DINAJPUR M. E. UNIT

(a) For twelve months:	
Assistant District Health Officer in charge of the Unit	1
Assistant to the Unit Officer	1
Malaria Supervisors	4
Malaria Inspectors	15
Laboratory Assistants	2
Motor Mechanic	1
Mistry Mate	1
Drivers	6
Cleaners	6
Sweeper	1
Peons	6
Surveillance Inspectors	4
Surveillance Workers	16
(b) For six months:	
Mates	36
Field Workers	216

Motor vehicles and insecticides in wettable powder form are provided by the United States Agency for International Development through the Government of India. The cost of operation including maintenance of staff at the rate of Rs. 1.78 lakhs per annum for West Dinājpur district is being borne by the State Government since the inception of the programme.

The above staff is controlled by the Deputy Director of Health Services (Insect-borne Diseases), West Bengal.

Other public health measures.—Rural Water Supply Scheme.

As for other public health measures, the Public Health Engineering Directorate of the Government has been sinking tube-wells and constructing masonry wells in the rural areas of the district, priority being given to those areas where scarcity of drinking water is most acute. Local contributions

are not insisted upon from the district. The Advisory Committee for Rural Water Supply has the authority to waive local contributions in deserving cases. The Tribal Welfare Department has also been sinking tube-wells in rural areas for providing good drinking water to the tribal people. A few wells and tube-wells have also been sunk under the Local Development Scheme according to which one-third of the cost of construction is to be borne by the beneficiaries. In 1959-60 the total number of wells constructed under all these schemes in the district was 869. The total number of wells constructed in the district since all these schemes were initiated is 2,307 tube-wells and 1,258 ring-wells according to the Collector, and 2,240 tube-wells and 2,031 surface wells according to the Chief Engineer, Public Health Engineering.

Improvement of rural sanitation.—Introduction of dug-well latrines.

An attempt is also being made to improve rural sanitation by providing dug-well latrines. The scheme was first taken up for implementation in Kāliāganj police station where 280 such latrines were dug. Gangārāmpur police station was next to receive attention in 1958 and 147 such latrines were provided. The scheme was then extended to Rāiganj police station in 1959-60. Altogether 108 such latrines have been constructed in Rāiganj police station. The maximum number of such latrines have been constructed in Hemtābād police station where 355 such latrines have been provided.

CHAPTER XV

OTHER SOCIAL SERVICES

ADVANCEMENT OF BACKWARD CLASSES AND TRIBES

Special organization for welfare of backward classes and tribes.

There is a Special Officer for Tribal Welfare who works under the District Magistrate. He is an Officer of the Home (General Administration) Department, and his salary is paid out of the General Administration Budget. His allowances are, however, paid out of the budget of the Tribal Welfare Department.

Establishment and maintenance of co-operative grain-golas.

Between the financial years 1950-51 and 1960-61 a number of measures were taken to improve the condition of the tribal people and the scheduled castes. Rs. 62,000 were spent during the First Five Year Plan period, and Rs. 111,750 during the Second Plan period towards the establishment and maintenance of grain-golas for the tribals. These grain-golas are operated by co-operative societies. They are financed by the Tribal Welfare Department, and the Co-operative Department guides their operations. The members of these societies may borrow paddy and repay the same with a reasonable rate of interest. There are such grain-golas in all the police stations of the district excepting the Islāmpur police station. There are more than one grain-gola in police stations having heavy concentrations of tribal population.

Educational advancement

In the field of education, financial help was given for the purchase of land, for the construction of hostels for tribal students reading in schools, for payment of tuition fees, examination fees and hostel charges of tribal and scheduled caste students and purchase of books by them, for establishment of junior basic schools, and for improvement of the primary schools in tribal concentration zones, and also for improvement of night schools and adult education centres. The Education Department also gave some financial help to students belonging to backward classes. Promotion of recreational and cultural activities received encouragement and support. Rs. 258,557 were spent during the First Plan period and Rs. 392,248 during the Second Plan period for extending additional facilities in the field of education to the tribals and scheduled castes.

Extension of special health and medical benefits.

Rs. 368,952 were similarly spent in extending special health and medical benefits to them during the same period. Special benefits under public health included water supply schemes, grants to the Health Centres and the dispensaries, and free distribution of medicines. Grants given to Health Centres and dispensaries are spent on medical treatment of tribals.

Efforts for improvement of agriculture.

Rs. 54,152 were spent on establishment of Agricultural Demonstration Centres in tribal areas, free distribution of improved types of poultry birds, upkeep of stud bulls distributed in tribal areas, and giving pumping sets for facilitating pump irrigation.

Aid for setting up industries.

With a view to encouraging tribal people to take to business or industry as a means of livelihood, Rs. 35,000 were spent in giving on an average Rs. 250 per person so that they could set up a business or an industry.

Other benefits.

Rs. 471,845 were spent on miscellaneous items, the most notable of which was free legal assistance to tribals for defending themselves in civil and also in criminal cases. Tribal Welfare Centres for providing recreational facilities to the tribals have been established and are maintained. Grants are also given in a number of cases to help the tribals in building improved types of houses, the expenditure on this account during 1959-60 and 1960-61 having been Rs. 127,500. Rs. 458,978 were also spent during the two Plan periods for affording members of the backward classes assistance for purchase of sites for houses, rewards to tribal headmen, improvement of the *kutcha* village roads, removal of untouchability of the Harijans, and for giving them agricultural loans.

Total expenditure during the first two plan periods.

In all, approximately Rs. 2,341,000 were spent in the district during the two Plan periods for extending special benefits to members of the scheduled tribes and the scheduled castes.

CHAPTER XVI

PUBLIC LIFE AND VOLUNTARY SOCIAL SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS

(a) REPRESENTATION OF THE DISTRICT IN THE STATE AND THE UNION LEGISLATURES.—POLITICAL PARTIES

Representation in the Vidhan Sabha.—Hold of the different parties.—The First General Elections.

In the First General Elections after Independence the district returned six candidates to the West Bengal Legislative Assembly from four constituencies. The Rāiganj and Bālurghāt constituencies were double-membered while the Itāhār and Gangārāmpur constituencies were single-membered.

The territorial extents of the constituencies were as follows:—

Rāiganj	Rāiganj, Hemtābād, Kāliāganj and Kushmandi police stations of Rāiganj sub-division.
Bālurghāt	Bālurghāt, Hili and Kumārganj police stations and Tapan police station (excluding the unions of Rāmpārā-Chenchrā, Ajmatpur and Hazratpur) of Bālurghāt sub-division.
Itāhār	Itāhār police station and Bangshihāri police station (excluding the unions of Gānguriā, Sibpur, Elāhābād and Brajaballavpur) of Rāiganj sub-division.
Gangārāmpur	Gānguriā, Sibpur, Elāhābād and Brajaballavpur unions of Bangshihāri police station of Rāiganj sub-division, Gangārāmpur police station and the unions of Rāmpārā-Chenchrā, Ajmatpur and Hazratpur of Tapan police station of Bālurghāt sub-division.

One of the seats in the Rāiganj constituency was reserved for a member of the scheduled castes, while one of the seats in the Bālurghāt constituency was reserved for a member of the scheduled tribes. The Congress Party secured all the six seats from the district. In the Rāiganj constituency the party won 61.16 per cent of the valid votes polled, thus easily defeating its rival, the Forward Bloc (Ruikar Group) which managed to secure 27.67 per cent. The Communist Party of India secured 8.29 per cent of the valid votes while one independent candidate secured 2.88 per cent. The results are comparable with those in the Bālurghāt constituency which was also double-membered, inasmuch as the Congress Party

polled 59.24 per cent of the valid votes, easily defeating its rival, the Revolutionary Socialist Party of India which secured only 24.61 per cent of the valid votes. An independent candidate secured 7.25 per cent of the valid votes while the Forward Bloc (Marxist) and the Forward Bloc (Ruikar Group) between them secured only 8.9 per cent of the votes. In the Itāhār constituency the Congress Party secured the seat by securing 47.24 per cent of the valid votes. The Communist Party of India and the Forward Bloc (Ruikar Group) both occupied almost the same position inasmuch as while one polled 24.15 per cent of the valid votes, the other polled 24.35 per cent. One independent candidate secured 4.26 per cent of the valid votes. In the Gangārāmpur constituency the Congress Party won, securing 49.31 per cent of the valid votes while the position was almost even between the Krishak Mazdoor Praja Party and the Revolutionary Socialist Party of India, the former securing 19.71 per cent and the latter secured 19.70 per cent of the valid votes. Three independents among them secured 11.28 per cent of the votes.

The Second General Elections.

In the Second General Elections held in 1957 the importance of the district increased due to the addition of the Islāmpur sub-division from the Purneā district of Bihar. The number of seats increased to ten. The Bālurghāt, the Gangārāmpur and the Rāiganj constituencies were double-membered while the Itāhār, the Choprā, the Goālpokhar and the Karandighi constituencies were single-membered. The territorial extents of the constituencies were as follows:

Bālurghāt	Hili, Bālurghāt and Tapan police stations in Bālurghāt sub-division.
Gangārāmpur	Kumārganj and Gangārāmpur police stations in Bālurghāt sub-division, and Kushmandi police station, and Bangshihāri police station (excluding union numbers 1 and 6 to 8) in Rāiganj sub-division.
Rāiganj	Rāiganj, Hemtābād and Kāliāganj police stations in Rāiganj sub-division.
Itāhār	Itāhār police station, and union numbers 1 and 6 to 8 in Bangshihāri police station, in Rāiganj sub-division.
Choprā	Choprā police station, and chowkidari union numbers 12, 13, 25 to 29, 31 and 32 in Islāmpur police station, in Rāiganj sub-division.
Goālpokhar	Goālpokhar police station (excluding chowkidari union numbers 11, 12 and 15 to 28), and Islāmpur police station (excluding chowkidari union numbers 12, 13, 25 to 29, 31 and 32) in Rāiganj sub-division.

Karandighi	Karandighi police station, and chowkidari union numbers 11, 12, and 15 to 28 in Goālpokhar police station, in Rāiganj sub-division.

One of the seats in the Rāiganj constituency was reserved for a member of the scheduled castes while one of the seats in each of the constituencies of Bālurghāt and Gangārāmpur was reserved for a member of the scheduled tribes. In the Bālurghāt constituency, an independent member won the general seat, the Congress Party securing only the reserved seat. The Congress Party won both the seats in the Rāiganj and Gangārāmpur constituencies. In Itāhār the Congress Party lost to the Communist Party of India, but in the Goālpokhar and Karandighi constituencies the seats went to the Congress. In the Choprā constituency the Congress candidate was elected unopposed.

The Congress Party secured 41.5 per cent of the valid votes in the Bālurghāt constituency, 41 per cent in the Gangārāmpur constituency, 48 per cent in the Rāiganj constituency, 32.9 per cent in the Itāhār constituency, 57.3 per cent in the Goālpokhar constituency, and 57.5 per cent in the Karandighi constituency. Independent candidates secured 58.5 per cent of the votes in the Bālurghāt constituency, 46 per cent in the Gangārāmpur constituency, 14.3 per cent in the Rāiganj constituency, 32.5 per cent in the Itāhār constituency and 10.3 per cent in the Karandighi constituency. No independent candidate contested the election from the Goālpokhar constituency. The Praja Socialist Party secured 13 per cent of the votes in the Gangārāmpur constituency, 22.6 per cent in the Rāiganj constituency, 42.7 per cent in the Goālpokhar constituency and 32.2 per cent in the Karandighi constituency. The Praja Socialist Party did not set up any candidate in the Itāhār and Bālurghāt constituencies. The Communist Party of India secured 15.1 per cent of the votes in the Rāiganj constituency and 34.6 per cent in the Itāhār constituency. The Party did not set up any candidate in any of the constituencies of Bālurghāt, Gangārāmpur, Goālpokhar and Karandighi.

The Third General Elections.

In the Third General Elections since Independence, held in 1962, the district returned ten candidates from ten single-member constituencies The constituencies were (1) Choprā, (2) Goālpokhar, (3) Karandighi, (4) Rāiganj, (5) Kāliāganj, (6) Kushmandi, (7) Gangārāmpur, (8) Bālurghāt, (9) Tapan and (10) Itāhār. The territorial extents of the constituencies are given below:

Choprā	Choprā police station, and chowkidari union numbers 12, 13, 25 to 29, 31 and 32 in Islāmpur police station, in Islāmpur sub-division of West Dinājpur and the area of old Choprā police station lying to the north of the river Mahā-

	nandā, in Phānsidewā police station in Siliguri sub-division of Dārjeeling district.
Goālpokhar	Goālpokhar police station (excluding chowkidari union numbers 11, 12, 15 to 28) and Islāmpur police station (excluding chowkidari union numbers 12, 13, 25 to 29, 31 and 32) in Islāmpur sub-division.
Karandighi	Karandighi police station and chowkidari union numbers 11, 12 and 15 to 28 in Goālpokhar police station in Islāmpur sub-division.
Rāiganj	Rāiganj police station in Rāiganj sub-division.
Kāliāganj	Kāliāganj and Hemtābād police stations in Rāiganj sub-division.
Kushmandi	Kushmandi police station, Bangshihāri police station (excluding union numbers 1 and 6 to 8) in Rāiganj sub-division and union numbers 2 and 3 in Gangārāmpur police station, in Bālurghāt sub-division.
Gangārāmpur	Kumārganj police station and Gangārāmpur police station (excluding union numbers 2 and 3) in Bālurghāt sub-division.
Bālurghāt	Hili police station and Bālurghāt police station (excluding union numbers 1 to 3) in Bālurghāt sub-division.
Tapan	Tapan police station and union numbers 1 to 3 Bālurghāt police station in Bālurghāt sub-division.
Itāhār	Itāhār police station, and union numbers 1 and 6 to 8 in Bangshihāri police station in Rāiganj sub-division.

The seat in the Kāliāganj constituency was reserved for a member of the scheduled castes while the seats in the Gangārāmpur and Tapan constituencies were reserved for members of the scheduled tribes.

The Congress Party secured the seats from the Choprā, Karandighi, Rāiganj, Kāliāganj, Bālurghāt and Itāhār constituencies, securing 46.3 per cent, 45.1 per cent, 39.3 per cent, 39.1 per cent, 49.5 per cent and 52.4 per cent respectively of the votes polled in each of these constituencies. The Communist Party of India won the seats of the Kushmandi and Gangārāmpur constituencies securing 41.9 per cent and 50.4

per cent respectively of the total votes polled at each of these constituencies. The Praja Socialist Party secured the seat from the Goālpokhar constituency winning 42 per cent of the total votes in that constituency while the independent candidate supported by the Revolutionary Socialist Party of India won the seat from the Tapan constituency securing 52.6 per cent of the total votes polled. In the Choprā, Rāiganj, Kāliāganj and Itāhār constituencies, the most serious opposition to the Congress candidates came from the candidates set up by the Communist Party of India. The C.P.I. secured 21.1 per cent of the votes polled in the Choprā constituency, 24.7 per cent of the votes in the Rāiganj constituency, 30.1 per cent of the votes in the Kāliāganj constituency and 46 per cent of the votes in the Itāhār constituency. In the constituencies where the Congress Party was defeated, it offered the most serious opposition to the winning candidates.

In the Third General Elections the contests in the various constituencies were limited amongst the candidates set up by the Congress Party, the Communist Party of India, the Praja Socialist Party, the Swatantra Party and some Independent candidates. The table below gives the polling position of the various parties in the different constituencies of the district:

Sl. No.	Name of constituency	Percentages of votes polled by different political parties of the total votes polled						
		Congress	C.P.I.	P.S.P.	Swatantra	F.B.	Independents (supported by R.S.P.)	Independents
1.	Choprā	46.3	21.1	1.7	12.6			18.3
2.	Goālpokhar	34.9		42.0	17.2	5.9		
3.	Karandighi	45.1		38.3	4.7	7.2		4.7
4.	Rāiganj	39.3	24.7	20.1	1.1			14.8
5.	Kāliāganj (SC)	39.1	30.1	6.8	24.0			
6.	Kushmandi	30.2	41.9	16.7	11.2			
7.	Gangārāmpur (ST)	42.6	50.4	4.6	2.4			
8.	Bālurghāt	49.5		6.8			43.7	
9.	Tapan (ST)	41.1					52.6	6.3
10.	Itāhār	52.4	46.0					1.6

Representation in the Lok Sabha.—Hold of the different Parties.—The Third General Elections.

The district returned one candidate to the Lok Sabha in the Third General Elections from the Rāiganj Parliamentary constituency. Part of another Parliamentary constituency is situated in this district.

The details of the territorial jurisdictions of the two constituencies are given below:—

Name of constituency	Extent in terms of Assembly constituencies
1. Rāiganj	(1) Choprā, (2) Goālpokhar, (3) Karandighi, (4) Rāiganj, (5) Kāliāganj, (6) Kushmandi and (7) Gangārāmpur.
2. Bālurghāt (ST)	(1) Bālurghāt, (2) Tapan, (3) Itāhār, (4) Habibpur, (5) Māldā, (6) Kharbā and (7) Harishchandrapur.

The candidate elected from the Rāiganj constituency was sponsored by the Congress Party.

The Second General Elections.

In the Second General Elections, there was only one Parliamentary constituency which included the whole of the district and the police stations of Harishchandrapur, Kharbā, Gājol, Bāmangolā, Māldā and Habibpur of the district of Māldā. The constituency was double-membered, one of the seats being reserved for a member of the scheduled tribes. Both the seats were won by the Congress candidates. The candidate from the general seat secured 26 per cent of the valid votes polled while the candidate from the reserved seat polled 29 per cent of the valid votes polled.

The First General Elections.

In the First General Elections, the whole of West Dinājpur was included in the West Dinājpur Parliamentary constituency which covered also Gājol and Bāmangolā police stations of Māldā district. The constituency was single-membered. The candidate sponsored by the Congress Party won the election securing 59.45 per cent of the valid votes polled.

Extent of popular participation in the different General Elections.

In the First General Elections, 39.6 per cent of the voters exercised their franchise in the Rāiganj Assembly constituency. In Itāhār, it was 50.6 per cent, in Gangārāmpur 43.1 per cent, in Bālurghāt 41.8 per cent of the electors who exercised their franchise. In the Lok Sabha constituency, the percentage of those who exercised their franchise to the total number of voters was 40.9 per cent.

In the Second General Elections, the percentage of those who cast their votes to the total number of voters was 49 per cent in the Bālurghāt Assembly constituency, 42 per cent in the Gangārāmpur Assembly constituency, 44.6 per cent in the Rāiganj Assembly constituency, 49.4 per cent in the Itāhār Assembly constituency, 30.4 per cent in the Goālpokhar Assembly constituency, and 32.1 per cent in the Karandighi Assembly constituency.

In the Third General Elections, the percentages of the voters who cast their votes to the total number of voters in the different Assembly constituencies were as follows: (1) Choprā—37.76, (2) Goālpokhar—31.25, (3) Karandighi—36.57, (4) Rāiganj—46.44, (5) Kāliāganj—47.01, (6) Kushmandi—46.85, (7) Gangārāmpur—44.34, (8) Bālurghāt—53.66,

(9) Tapan—46.06 and (10) Itāhār—63.60. In the Lok Sabha constituency of Rāiganj, which is wholly situated in the district, 42.2 per cent of the electors took part in the vote.

Representation in the Vidhan Parishad.

Prior to the existing delimitation according to which the local authorities of West Dinājpur district have been allotted one seat in the West Bengal Legislative Council, this district was included in the West Bengal East (Local Authorities) constituency together with the districts of Māldā, Murshidābād and Nadiā, having 5 seats in the Legislative Council. In the 1962 biennial election, the West Dinājpur district returned one candidate from the Local Authorities constituency to the Legislative Council. This district is also included in two other Legislative Council constituencies along with the districts of Dārjeeling, Jalpāiguri, Cooch Behār and Māldā, one of which is the West Bengal North Graduates' constituency and the other the West Bengal North Teachers' constituency. In 1962, the West Bengal North Teachers' constituency returned a candidate to the Council in a biennial election. There has been no biennial election from the West Bengal North Graduates' constituency in 1962.

(b) NEWSPAPERS

Calcutta dailies in common circulation.

The daily newspapers which are in common circulation within the district are those which are printed and published from Calcutta, like the *Ānanda Bāzār Patrikā*, the *Jugāntar*, the *Amrita Bāzār Patrikā*, *The Statesman*, the *Hindusthān Standard* and the *Dainik Viswāmitra*. Apart from dissemination of news, these newspapers play an important role in shaping the political ideas of the people of the district. There are also a number of newspapers which are published locally, but none of them are published daily. All the newspapers that are published locally in the district are published weekly and in the Bengali language. They are: (1) the *Sāptāhik Ātreyee*, (2) the *Barendra Bhumi*, (3) the *Shankha*, (4) the *Bārtā* and (5) the *Kulik*. A monthly journal called the *Udichi* is also published from Rāiganj.

Local weeklies and monthlies.

(c) VOLUNTARY SOCIAL SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS

Apart from charitable dispensaries, there are a number of social service and cultural organisations in the district. Mention may be made of the Prāchya Bhārati, the Mahājāti Mandir, the Bālurghāt Agrani Mahilā Samabāy Samity Ltd., the Manimelā Mahilā Samity and the Bangi Women's Co-operative Industrial Home Ltd.,—all of Bālurghāt ; and the Milani Club of Gangārāmpur, the Kāliāganj Mahilā Samity, the Rāiganj Co-operative Mahilā Sammilani Ltd., the Rāiganj Mahilā Samabāy Shilpa Sangha Ltd. and the Rāiganj Institute. The

Prāchya Bhārati was established in 1947. It maintains a library, a drama section and a gymnasium. It also organises inter-district music competitions, physical demonstrations, etc., through its *utsab-kalā* section. It has a museum containing a number of images found in the district. The Mahājāti Mandir holds a night school, runs a *mahilā samiti*, a rural library, a recreation club and a community centre for the backward classes. The *mahilā samitis* are doing useful work among the local womenfolk, spreading education among them and teaching them to be self-reliant. The Manimelā Mahilā Samity organises weekly markets in which the buyers and the sellers are only women. The Bālurghāt Agrani Mahilā Samabāy Samity Ltd., the Bangi Women's Co-operative Industrial Home Ltd., the Samjhiā Mahilā Samabāy Samity Ltd., the Buniādpur Mahilā Samabāy Samity Ltd., the Women's Co-operative Industrial Home Ltd., Ākhānagar, the Rāiganj Co-operative Mahilā Sammilani Ltd., and the Rāiganj Mahilā Samabāy Shilpa Sangha Ltd. have been working in the co-operative field and have been engaged mainly in working out various schemes sponsored by the Government, e.g., hand-pounding of rice, embroidery, weaving and manufacture of hand-made paper. The Milani Club of Gangārāmpur affords an opportunity for the local young men to come together socially. The Raiganj Institute of Rāiganj is an institution which can be compared with the Prāchya Bhārati of Bālurghāt.

CHAPTER XVII

PLACES OF INTEREST

Asuragarh.—In the police station of Goālpokhar, there are ruins at a place called Asuragarh which is situated on the bus route between Rāiganj and Islāmpur. It is not possible to state the period to which the ruins relate. Part of the ruins are under forest, a portion of which has already been cleared for cultivation.

Bāje Bindol.—There is an old temple at Bāje Bindol (J.L. No. 35) in Rāiganj police station. It is credited by the local people to have been built in the Pāla period.

Bāngarh.—The ruins of Bāngarh have been found on the eastern bank of the river Punarbhavā in *mouza* Rājibpur in Gangārāmpur police station.

Bāngarh is supposed to have been the site of the capital of Bān Rājā of legendary fame. Krishna's grandson Aniruddha is said to have abducted Ushā, the daughter of Bān Rājā, with a view to marry her. This provoked a battle between Bān Rājā and Krishna, and Bān Rājā was defeated and lost nine hundred and ninety-eight of his thousand arms. He was a devotee of Shiva and it was through Shiva's grace that Bān Rājā had his body made whole. There is a trace of a very old road running through the *mouza* of Nārāyanpur which is situated opposite the *mouza* Rājibpur. Local tradition has it that Aniruddha carried away Ushā along this road.

Bāngarh marks the site of the historical city of Devkoṭ or Koṭivarsha. The ruins were systematically excavated by Shri Kunja Gobinda Goswami under the auspices of the University of Calcutta in 1938-41. According to him the oldest relics found at Bāngarh may be assigned to the Maurya or early Sunga period. These relics relating to the Maurya or early Sunga period were recovered from the lowest stratum. The next higher stratum contained the ruins of brick-built structures having very small rooms. From the associated objects, Shri Goswami thinks that this stratum may be ascribed to the Gupta age. The upper stratum yielded objects belonging to the Pāla period. The first or uppermost stratum coincided with the Muslim period. Full details of the objects unearthed by the excavation would be available from the portion of the report of Shri Goswami which is reproduced as an appendix to this Chapter.

Amidst the ruins of Bāngarh, near the place where Shri Goswami carried out his excavation, there are two tanks or pools which are even now known as Amrit Kunda and

Jivat Kunda. An account of these pools as given by Dr. Buchanan (Hamilton) is quoted below:

> "Near the monument of Muhammedan saint are the two celebrated pools Omrito and Jivot, which I mentioned in my account of Ban raja. In their present state they are very different from the pools of life and immortality, which their names imply, as they are filled with abominably dirty water. They have never been large, but the size of the heaps of bricks round them shows, that they have been surrounded by large buildings; and probably they have been sacred ponds (Pushkorinis), which occupied the areas of two temples. The women of the vicinity who have been unfortunate in their children, and have lost many by death, frequent these pools, and carrying with them two living fish of the kind called Kamach Singgi, bathe in each pond, and make an offering of a fish.
>
> "In Omrito a projecting stone was pointed out as the dead cow that had been thrown into the water by the infidel Yovons, in order to deprive it of its virtues. I proposed to take it out, which excited a smile of contempt in my guides, who assured me, that one of the Dinajpur rajas had tied ropes to it, and with three elephants had attempted in vain to procure this monument of antiquity. The pandit attached to the survey, who is perhaps somewhat of a philosopher, went next day with a dozen men and some ropes, and pulled it out with some degree of exultation. He found it to be an image of the bull Vrisho, which is usually worshipped by the sect of Shiva, and which the infidels very probably threw into the pond."

At present both the pools are almost of the same size and each of them is approximately 200 feet (61 m) in length and 100 feet (30 m) in breadth. The depth of water is about 45 feet (14 m). In the month of Chaitra on the *trayodashi tithi* of the dark fortnight a religious fair known locally as Bāruni *mela* is held near the mound on the bank of the river Punarbhavā where there is a very old Shiva temple. On that day people bathe first in the Amrit Kunda and then in the Jivat Kunda and then offer *puja* to Shiva in the temple.

Bangshihāri.—The following account of the places of historical interest in Bangshihāri police station, visited by Dr. Buchanan (Hamilton) is reproduced from his account:

> "In this division there is no place of worship of any note, but there are several antiquities near the thana; at about half a mile south from this place is a small Hindu temple, called a *Mondir*, a work apparently of considerable antiquity. Its base is a quadrangular prism, about 20 feet high, and 12 wide. Its summit is a pyramid of about the same height. This part of the

building has been much ornamented with carved bricks, especially a kind of escutcheon on each face, that possesses some degree of good taste. The artists have been ignorant of the method of constructing an arch; for the door is contracted above, to a point, by the horizontal rows of bricks, gradually encroaching on its width; not the smallest tradition remains concerning its founder, and the image has been removed.

"At a little distance west from this *mondir* begins a narrow elevated ridge of land, perhaps half a mile wide, which extends west to the Beliya about two miles, and seems to me entirely artificial. It is every where full of small tanks, inequalities, and heaps, many of which consist almost entirely of bricks. The largest of these has been lately opened, probably in part to look for hidden treasure, and in part to procure bricks for building an office (*kuchery*), for collecting the rents, and this latter view has not been in vain. The building has probably been a temple, in form of a polygon. The outer wall is about four feet thick. At the western end of this elevated space are two tanks of considerable dimensions, which are almost filled up, end (and?) entirely choked with weeds. The place is called Brojobollobhopur, and I have no doubt has been a considerable town; but no tradition remains.

"About 1¼ mile west from the Beliya, is a very large tank, called Melandighi (J.L. No. 112 Maliandighi*), which is nearly choked with weeds. The only tradition concerning it is, that it was dug by a princess (*Rani*), and that a miracle was necessary to procure water. About 1¼ mile further west is Gordighi (Gaurdighi, J.L. No. 106 Khayerbāri*), a tank, the water of which has extended about 600 yards N. and S. and 400 yards E. and W., and which of course is a Hindu work. A considerable portion of it has now so far filled up, that it is cultivated for rice. About 1,200 yards west from this tank is another, called Altadighi (J.L. No. 4 Cheuti Mahespur*), which extends nearly to the same dimensions, but is placed with its greatest length from east to west, and therefore is a Muhammedan work. Between these two tanks are the ruins of Borohata (J.L. No. 5 Bairāhātā*), which are very large heaps or mounds, that consist in a great measure of bricks. In many places the foundations of walls may be traced, and even the dimensions of the chambers. All these chambers are of a small size, owing to which they may have resisted the attacks of time better than more spacious appartments. They are chiefly situated

* The information mentioned in brackets has been inserted by me.—Editor.

in the southern division of the town called Kutwari. In this part are some small tanks that have evidently been entirely lined with brick. In the centre of the ruins are indubitable traces of a small square fort, which has been surrounded by a double wall of brick, and an intermediate ditch. The ruin to the north of this fort is almost entirely without the trace of regular form, but the quantity of bricks which it contains is great. At its northern extremity is the monument of a Muhammedan *Pir*, Budul Dewan, which is built of brick; in its gate are two stones, but there is nothing about them to determine, whether they have been brought by the founders, or taken from the ruins. There is no sort of tradition concerning the persons who either founded or destroyed these works.

"I observed also in this division, on the road towards the S.E., two places where there were small tanks, and heaps of earth and bricks, which may have been towns; but there was nothing about them which indicated their ever having been places of considerable importance."

The Block Development Officer, Bangshihāri, reports that at present the tank Maliandighi is free from weeds and is full of water. He, however, reports that the tank Gaurdighi has become completely silted up and that paddy is now cultivated there. He also reports that the tank Altadighi is still in existence and full of water.

Bhāior.—This *mouza* bearing Jurisdiction List No. 188 is situated about 1½ miles (about 2.5 km) south-west of Bhikāhār in Tapan police station. There is a torso and head of an enormous sandstone Dashabhujā Durgā on a raised mound in this place.

Bhikāhār.—It is a *mouza* bearing Jurisdiction List No. 184 situated about 2½ to 3 miles (about 4 to 5 km) south of Kardaha, in Tapan police station. Ruins of ancient brick temples containing figures of animals, birds, etc., were found here.

Dhaldighi and *Kāldighi.*—These tanks are situated in the police station of Gangārāmpur. The Kāldighi is situated almost on the road to Gangārāmpur from Bālurghāt and lies in the *mouzas* of Rāmchandrapur, Aswinpārā, Raghunāthbāti and Rājibpur. At the time of the Settlement operations of 1934-40, the length of the Kāldighi from bottom to inner side of the bank was found to be 3,960 feet (1,207 m) and the breadth from bottom to inner side of the bank was found to be 960 feet (293 m). These dimensions thus related to the water surface of the tank and gave an area of approximately 87 acres (35 ha). The Collector reports that the present water area of the tank is 62.37 acres (25 ha). Local legends have it that the tanks Kāldighi and Dhaldighi were named after the two queens Kālorāni and Dhalorāni of Bān Rājā. Both the

tanks appear to have been excavated in the same period. The Dhaldighi extends from east to west and is situated in the *mouzas* of Rāmchandrapur, Purānpārā and Rājibpur and very near the Kāldighi. The Dhaldighi measured 4,080 feet (1,244 m) in length and 870 feet (265 m) in breadth in 1934-40. It thus had a water area of 81.49 acres (33 ha). The Collector reports that the present area of the tank is 78.90 acres (31.95 ha). A *mela* is held on a plot of land on the southern side of Dhaldighi. It is organised by a family of *fakirs* but its origin is not very ancient. The *mela* was first started in 1855. It is usually held towards the end of winter and lasts for a period of about six weeks. The *mela* owes its importance to the various types of merchandise that are brought for sale here. Livestock is also brought here for sale, some of it even from outside West Bengal. The *mela* is very largely attended and is the most important in the Sadar or Bālurghāt sub-division.

The tomb of Shāh Ataullah is situated near Dhaldighi. Shāh Ataullah is supposed to have lived in the early part of the fourteenth century. There is also a shrine near Dhaldighi from the inscription of which it appears that it was erected during the reign of Rukn-ud-din Kaikāus who ruled at Gaur between 1291-1301 A.D.

Dwipkhanda.—This *mouza* bearing Jurisdiction List No. 140 in Tapan police station is situated about 1½ miles (about 2.5 km) east of Tapan. The entire *mouza* is studded with high mounds and ridges which probably contain ruins of ancient structures.

Fakirdighi.—This tank is situated in *mouza* Mirual (J.L. No. 174) in the police station of Rāiganj. The tank covers an area of 20 acres (8.1 ha). It is said that it was excavated by Sultān Husain Shāh. Adjoining the tank there is a mound which appears to be square in size, being about 50 feet (15 m) in length and about the same measure in breadth. The mound is formed of a solid brick structure, only the surface of which is covered with earth.

Gangārāmpur.—The *mouza* Gangārāmpur in Gangārāmpur police station was known in the Muslim period as Dumdumā from the fact that a military outpost was located there. This place is very near the ruins of Bāngarh which marks the site of the historical city of Devkoṭ which, as is well-known, was used as a military outpost by Bakhtyār Khalji and his successors. The local legends about the origin of the name Dumdumā appears to be supported by historical evidence. The population of the *mouza* in the 1961 Census was 532.

Hemtābād.—Dr. Buchanan (Hamilton) noticed some ruins near Hemtābād which were traditionally associated with the capital of one "Mohes Raja". Near Hemtābād is also situated a *darga* dedicated to Mukhdum Dokorposh, who is credited to have been responsible for the flight of Rājā Mahesh. Dr. Buchanan (Hamilton) also noticed in that area a small

square appartment in a state of ruin in the centre of which was the tomb said to be that of Pir Buzeruddin. He was of the opinion that that structure had been built from materials taken from Hindu buildings. He also found mosques and buildings which had been similarly constructed. About a mile and a half away from this ruin there was another which was known locally as the *takht* or throne of Husain Shāh. The throne consisted of a quadrangular truncated pyramid of about 20 feet (6 m) in perpendicular height and was constructed of bricks. On the summit of this pyramid was a square area in the centre of which a terrace had been raised. Husain Shāh is said to have sat on the raised structure and beheld the festivities that were organised at the marriage of his daughter. These relics were probably noticed by Dr. Buchanan (Hamilton) in *mouzas* Hemtābād and Kasbā Mahaso (J.L. No. 176) in Rāiganj police station. The ruins associated with the name of Rājā Mahesh are situated in *mouza* Sonābanda (J.L. No. 80) in police station Hemtābād. The apartment over the tomb of Pir Buzeruddin, described by Dr. Buchanan (Hamilton), now no longer exists. Similarly, no trace is now visible of the terrace over the throne of Husain Shāh, that was noticed by Dr. Buchanan (Hamilton).

Kāldighi.—'*Dhaldighi* and *Kāldighi*' may be seen.

Karandighi.—In the police station of Karandighi, there is a tank named Karandighi, locally associated with a king named Karna. There is a tendency in the locality to identify this Karna with the Karna of the Mahābhārata. The local people, both Hindus and Muslims, believe that wishes are granted if one takes a dip in the water of Karandighi promising to make an offering should the wish come true. If the wish comes true, then offering is made on the first of Baishākh following, at the tank. A *mela* or religious gathering is held in the month of Baishākh at the banks of Karandighi to celebrate the fulfilment of vows.

Kardaha.—The *mouza* Kardaha bearing Jurisdiction List No. 30 is in Tapan police station. It is situated near the river Punarbhavā and is celebrated as the place where Krishna burned the nine hundred and ninety-eight arms of Bān Rājā. It contains an eighteenth century brick temple of the Dinājpur Rāj. The population of the *mouza* in the 1961 Census was 901.

Kasbā-Mahaso.—Mounds, similar to the mound at Fakirdighi, though of lesser height, have been spotted in the *mouza* of Kasbā-Mahaso (J.L. No. 176) in Rāiganj police station.

Mahipāldighi.—This tank is situated in the *mouza* of that name (J.L. No. 190) in Kushmandi police station. In 1934-40 it had a water surface measuring 1,340 yards (1,225 m) in length and 370 yards (338 m) in breadth, i.e. 102.43 acres (41.48 ha). This tank has considerably silted up. The Collector reports that the present area of its water surface is between 60 to 70 acres (24 to 28 ha). Dr. Buchanan

(Hamilton) noticed several places of worship, both Hindu and Muslim, on the banks of the tank. The vicinity is marked with ruins. Mahipāldighi was probably excavated during the reign of King Mahipāla I of the Pāla dynasty. In 1793, one Mr. Thomas erected an indigo factory on the northern bank of Mahipāldighi. This factory was the branch of a concern located at Māldā.

Manahali.—It is a *mouza* bearing Jurisdiction List No. 50 in Tapan police station. It is the place where the famous Manahali copper-plate inscription was found.

Nārāyanpur.—It is believed that the tomb of Bakhtyār Khalji is situated at *mouza* Nārāyanpur in Gangārāmpur police station. Bakhtyār Khalji (1201-1206 A.D.), as is well-known, returned from his Tibetan campaign a defeated man, and was slain by one of his officers.

Panchanagar.—This *mouza* (J.L. No. 217) in Kushmandi police station contains ruins dating probably from the Hindu period.

Prānsāgar.—This is a fairly big tank situated in the *mouza* Sahara (Jurisdiction List No. 144) in the police station Gangārāmpur. It is of comparatively recent origin, having been excavated by Rājā Prannath of the Dinājpur Rāj family, who ruled between 1722 and 1760 A.D. In 1934-40 it had an water area of 920 yards (841 m) in length and 240 yards (219 m) in breadth, i.e., 45.6 acres (18.5 ha). The Collector reports that the present area is almost the same as the area in 1934-40.

Tapandighi.—This tank is situated in the police station Tapan. It is very near the headquarters of the police station. It extends from north to south. Its measurements in 1934-40 were 1,420 yards (about 1,298 m) in length and 400 yards (about 366 m) in breadth. The measurements related to the water surface and gave an area of 117.35 acres (about 47.53 ha). The Collector reports that the present area of the water surface is about 80-85 acres (about 32-34 ha). This tank is rapidly silting up, and unless it is re-excavated shortly, there is a risk of its becoming completely silted up in the not too distant future. According to local traditions this tank is supposed to have been excavated by Bān Rājā who used to perform *tarpan* with the water of this tank, from which the name Tapandighi is derived. Historically, the excavation of the tank is assigned to the Pāla-Sena period. A copper-plate inscription of Lakshmanasena (dated about 1181 A.D.) was found here.

APPENDIX

(CHAPTER V OF *Excavations at Bangarh* BY KUNJA GOBINDA GOSWAMI, *Asutosh Museum Memoir No. 1*, CALCUTTA, 1948.)

"In the foregoing pages* it has been seen that the trial diggings for some time in four successive winters from 1937-38 to 1940-41 at Bangarh have revealed some interesting evidences of the past history of this part of Bengal. The spade laid bare at a spot in Tr. 5 (which was selected for trial excavation) five regular strata of brick structures with objects associated with each of the strata. [Pl. XV(a)†] The earliest of them might be ascribed to the Maurya or early Sunga period. The evidence of the earliest or the 5th stratum so far exposed is a ring well (dia. 2′5″) built of pottery rings of 2′5″ in diameter, 8½″ in height and ⅓″ in thickness at a depth of 20′6″ from the datum line. The well was cleared upto the water level or about 6 ft. below its top (or 27 ft. below the datum line). The minor antiquities are extremely rare at this level and the virgin soil is not far below. Consequently this ring well marks the site of one of the earliest civilised settlements of Bengal. This solitary discovery, however, solves only the problem of the drinking water of the people of Bangarh in the Maurya or early Sunga period and further excavation on a large scale at this level may reveal the mystery of the habitations of those people. This small scale trial digging has not yet furnished us with any information as to whether these early inhabitants built brick houses or *kachcha* buildings for their dwelling purposes. The fifth stratum here is likely to be associated with the Maurya period for the reason that the top of the well is at a considerable depth (about 8 ft.) from the foundation of the buildings of the fourth stratum which has brought out distinct traces of the Sunga period in the shape of a variety of small antiquities. Polished black pottery which is generally believed to be an object of the Maurya period has been found almost at similar or rather higher levels in the neighbourhood of this very trench (Antiquities Nos. 707, 779, 871, 940, 1088, 1108 etc.). Moreover the Mahasthan inscription[1] proves that Pundranagar (Modern Mahasthan on the river *Karatoyā* in Bogra district) was the seat of a Mahāmātra during the rule of the Maurya emperors. Whereas Pundranagar was in possession of the Maurya kings, it is not unreasonable to suppose that *Koṭivarsha* or modern Bangarh also came under their administration. The art of Bangarh of that period proves beyond doubt a well-established state of the society. The polished black pottery of this period reached a high water

* These pages have not been reproduced in this book.—Editor.
† The plates have not been reproduced in this book.—Editor.
"[1] Ep. Ind., vol. XXI, p. 85."

mark in the history of pottery in India. The pottery consisted of dish, bowl, cup, jug, pan, jar and vase, etc. [Pl. XXVII(b)—XXX]. But together with such artistic products from the hands of master craftsmen ordinary wares such as crude female figurines [Pl. XXI(a) 2, 3, 5, 7] were still produced which may perhaps be termed according to Dr. Stella Kramrisch "the timeless variety."

The Main Mound of Bangarh is surrounded by ditch, and earth dug out of the ditch was very probably used for building mud rampart walls at the beginning. That the city passed through various ups and downs is proved by successive changes and repairs noticeable in the recently excavated rampart wall. The wall near the present entrance to the mound from the road of the District Board has been exposed up to a very low level. This wall which has been exposed to the depth of 16.8 ft. from the datum line shows bricks of different sizes at different levels perhaps attributable to different periods. The wall, if dug up to a lower level, may show its predecessor probably an earthen wall or else the latter may form the solid core of the brick wall. Usually the beginnings of a city are modest and humble, and gradually its orbit extends and prosperity increases with the growth and development of trade and communications. The fourth stratum of Bangarh shows distinct signs of the prosperous condition of the town. The city had by then a brick built wide rampart wall (10.8" wide). It had drains, cess-pits and residential buildings, made of burnt bricks of a very large size. We have got wells of the 2nd, 3rd and 5th strata and it may be assumed that more extended excavation is likely to lay bare wells of the 4th stratum or Sunga period as well. So far as the architecture of the ancient city of *Koṭivarsha* is concerned, the fourth stratum shows that the walls of the residential buildings as well as the cess-pools were made of single course of bricks (16½"—18" × 9½"—11" × 2¼"—3") (Tr. 5.) [Pl. XV(a)]. The drains were also built of bricks ordinarily of the same size (Tr. 5 and Tr. 8) [Pl. XVIII(a)]. The structures of this age are more finely built than those of the third stratum where the walls are very thin and poorly built. In the third stratum (Tr. 8) we come across buildings of very extensive measurements, with 11 inches thick walls, *i.e.*, thickness equals to the width of a brick. The floor of the building of this stratum in Tr. 8, covers a vast area. Rammed concrete mixed up with lime is found at different places in connection with building of the floor The extensive area covered by the floor probably marks the site of a large quadrangle by the side of some temple where people perhaps used to assemble for the purpose of religious, social or commercial activities. The quality and workmanship of the buildings is not as good as that found in Strata II and IV. The width of the wall in two small houses in Tr. 5, is exactly the same as that in Tr. 8. The construction of a pit (in Tr. 8.) Pl. [XV(b)] of the 3rd stratum is very

nice. It is roughly like the shape of a basket at the top and gradually turns into a rectangular hollow at the bottom. This structure does not go upto the water level to prove itself to be a well nor does it show any outlet from it. So it may be suggested that it was a pit or a *kuṇḍa* probably used for depositing the used flowers etc., of the worship. Such *kuṇḍas* are seen even today in famous temples in Bengal and elsewhere to be used for the same purpose. That this area was the place of worship in the later age is proved by the find of the terracotta figure of Gaṇeśa [Pl. XX(1)] and the discovery of the foundation of a building which looks like a temple (Tr. 8) of the Pala period [Pl. XVI(a), (b)]. The fact that Bangarh was famous for prosperous temples etc., as quoted by the poet Sandhayakar Nandi also in the Ramacharita[1] has been referred to elsewhere in this report.

The rooms of the houses of this stratum are generally very small so much so that some of them could hardly have been used for dwelling purposes and might serve the purpose of the cess pit etc. Another remarkable feature of this stratum is that the structures of this stratum are generally associated with a good number of tiles, of which some are found with a groove and two holes for fastening by means of nails or a cord[2] and some with ridge in the middle. These tiles were used for covering the roof of the houses which used to stand on thin and small walls. The small rooms of this stratum were probably used as stores, kitchen and in some cases (e.g. in Tr. 8) residential quarters also. The buildings of this stratum can be supposed to belong to the Gupta age in consideration of the associated objects. The structural evidence so far discovered does not vouch for a high class architecture at this time in these parts of the site. So far as the construction is concerned the buildings of the fourth and the second strata are far superior to those of the first and the third. Mud was used for mortar in the structures of the fourth and second strata. The same material was used probably for some of the structures of the third stratum but evidence of lime and surki (concrete) is met with in the floor of some buildings of this stratum. The buildings of the first or uppermost stratum are very badly damaged and it cannot be definitely said as to what exactly was the composition of the mortar. But it may be supposed that the buildings of this period might have had lime and surki etc. for mortar.

The buildings of the 2nd stratum or the Pala period had a definite plan in so far as they have revealed themselves in course of excavation. The structures of this period comprise in rampart walls, compound walls, residential quarters, temples with ambulatory path and its enclosing walls, damp-

" [1] Ramacharita, III. 9.
Brahma kulodbhavāṁ skandanagareṇa murchchhitāmitāpachiti (ṁ) tairati gurūtpa (lā) vāsair asvapnair-bhari (ta) śoṇitapurāścha."
" [2] Pl. XXIII(b) 7."

proof granaries, bath-rooms, platform, ramp, drain and ring well etc. The size and shape of the bricks vary according to nature of works. For instance, wedge-shaped bricks were used in the ring well, while 8½" × .8½" × .2" bricks were required for the construction of the lotus-shaped *kuṇḍa* in Tr. 5. The bricks of the ramp, platform and bathroom were also different.

The buildings of the Pala period had in some of them stone pillars placed on stone basement set on a few courses of bricks [Pl. XIV (a) (b)]. Such rooms have been found in three different parts with pillars lying in some of them. The pillars are square at the top and bottom and octagonal in the middle [Pl. XIV(b)].

The door-jamb, door-sill and lintel, etc. were made of stone and profusely decorated. Such a door-jamb measuring 10'10" × .1'10½" × .10½" and containing decoration of the Pala period has been dug out in Tr. 5 [Pl. XIV(a)]. This door-jamb was made to serve the purpose of a door-sill when it became damaged at a later time; and this has been found in that condition. The male figure and the *Gaṇa* figure carved in this stone, show various kinds of ornaments for different parts of the body. A stone *āmalaka* also which is generally used at the top of the temple has come out in course of excavation and belongs to the Pala School of Art. The third decorated piece which very likely formed a part of the cornice has been found near the supposed temple in Tr. 8. That during the Pala period Bangarh was very rich in lithic art may be proved by the innumerable objects of art preserved at the house of the Maharaja of Dinajpur and elsewhere.

Bangarh was not only famous for plastic art in stone but was equally noted for the same in terracotta also. Bengal is particularly poor in stone, hence the plastic representation of this province tried to find out some other channel to give expression to her art and architecture, etc. Consequently Bengal artists took recourse to clay for giving form to their artistic impulses. This material was utilised for the full manifestation in the fields of art and architecture alike. The thousands of terracotta plaques unearthed at Paharpur are the vivid examples of the plastic art of Bengal during the Pala period. Similar enthusiasm was shown in architecture also. Bricks were made in such a way as to be shaped into, or to form part of flower, foliage, bird, animal or human figures or some other designs. The antiquities from Bangarh present a good collection of different motifs in bricks used for the buildings of the (second stratum or) Pala period. Some of the motifs are the conventional lotus, dentil, line-and-wave, lotus petals, creeper, lozenge-and-square, stepped-pyramid, creeper-and-leaf, design with a swan in the middle with the head of a demon in the centre, part of a design with parrot's head in the middle with lower part of a human figure, upper part (head) or the lower part of a lion, bricks forming parts of

the figure of a lion as also one shaped into an elephant probably meant for a bracket, part of human face and various other motifs [Pl. XXVI (a) (b)]. These decorative bricks were essentially meant for the cornice, brackets and mouldings of the buildings. Terracotta plaques of the Paharpur type were also probably used for the decoration of the façade of the walls. But their number is very limited at Bangarh. So far as the plastic art is concerned the ancient people of Bangarh made terracotta figures and small plaques for religious worship and toys for children. They made mother goddess with highly decorative ornaments in plaques [Pl. XIX (a) (b); XXI (b) 1-3, 5-6] and also a crude variety in round [Pl. XXI (a) 2, 3, 5, 7]. Bull or *nandī* was also probably a cult object. Small plaques containing figures of bull [Pl. XXII (a) 1, 2, 6] and an uninscribed sealing with the figure of a running bull [Pl. XXIV (b) 6] and an inscribed sealing (No: 1935) with a taurine symbol testify to this statement. That Buddhism also had some influence over the people of this place may be found in the expressions *Bhutarakhitasa* [Pl. XXIV (b) 3] and *chhatagahasa śamana vilalasa* [Pl. XXIV (b) 4] inscribed in the sealings (No: 1543 and No: 2070, respectively). The former is a name seen in one of the Buddhist donors mentioned at the Bharhut railings and the latter is called a *śamana* (*śramaṇa*) which is a term for the Buddhist *monk*. Are the bull and *taurine* (nandipada) the representative symbols of Jainism? During the Pala period one of the iconic representations was, of course, *Gaṇeśa* (No: 1287) [Pl. XX(1)]. We have not yet come across any other antiquity here which can be identified with any iconic figure. The other representations are found either in relief or in the round. Of the former variety female figure or mother goddess or Yakshi forms the majority. In this class, two varieties are noticeable—one bears the characteristics of the Sunga terracottas found elsewhere in India and the other shows peculiarities and techniques of the Kushan period inasmuch as one of them bears a female figure with nimbus around her head. She is attended by a female figure on either side [Pl. XXI(b) 3]. It may be remarked here that it is usually believed so far that nimbus appears in the plastic art for the first time during the Kushan period. It may be mentioned that some other terracottas found in Tr. 9 and elsewhere in the main mound show characteristics of the Kushan period [Pl. XXI(b) 4] but no building is found associated with them as yet. Future excavation may reveal whether these are stray finds or there were regular urban settlements in this part of the country at that time as well.

Of the round type, some belong to the 1st century B.C. and 1st century A.D., while there are some which can aptly be ascribed to the Gupta age though their number is limited. Some of them show the characteristics of that age in style as well as in technique. A fragment of an arm, hollow inside, showing black colour and burnt husks inside was discovered

in course of digging in Tr. 5. Such technique is found in some other fragmentary figures also.

I have already stated that of the fifth stratum very few antiquities except the ring-well has been found up till now. So a description of a life in that age will be out of place at this stage for obvious reasons. We can make an attempt to give a picture of life in successive stages on the basis of our study of the antiquities found at Bangarh and detailed elsewhere in this report.

The people of the fourth stratum or Sunga period used to build brick-houses for their dwelling purpose and *pucca* drains for letting out water and cess pit for the deposit of dirty water. Water was probably supplied from the river Punarbhava and well also was perhaps provided for at places.[1]

The staple food of the people of this place, in all probability, was rice.[2] The males used the dhoti, scarf, and turban while the females used tunic, scarp and skirt. As regards ornaments, the fairer sex was in the habit of using beads of various stones (*viz.*, carnelian, milky quartz, chalcedony, amethyst, jasper, agate, jade and blood stone, etc.) [Pl. XXXI-XXXII] besides terracotta which was generally used by the poorer people ; bangles of shell, glass, paste and terracotta, anklet and strands of girdles of jewels are also some of the other ornaments. Head gear and round pendant or *tāṭaṅka chakra*[3] for the ear and rosette-shaped pendant for the central place of the necklace were also in vogue. Round ear-ring was used by male members of the society.[4] Evidence of any other ornaments being used by the males is not yet forthcoming.

Spinning was practised on a large scale as is evident from the find of numerous terracotta spindle whorls. It may also be supposed that the diaphanous dress used to be worn by the rich and aristocratic people.

Bullock cart was used for the purpose of transport and conveyance [Pl. XXXIII (a) 13]. Journey was also performed on horse back [Pl. XXI (b) 4]. It may be pointed out that this part of the country was not devoid of the benefit of reading and writing. The inscribed clay sealings testify to this fact as also that Brahmi of the 2nd and 1st cen. B.C. was the script of the 4th stratum, and the language was *Prakrit*.

The legal tender of the time was the punch-marked silver and copper coins and also cast copper coins [Pl. XXIV (a)].

So far as the religion is concerned, the ordinary people appear to have worshipped a kind of female figurine—may be *mother goddess*. The local people were probably influenced also by the Jainism and the Buddhism. The cult objects

"[1] Wells have been found in 2nd, 3rd and 5th strata. So it may be supposed that 4th stratum also was provided with wells at places."

"[2] A seal containing rice plant in railing has been discovered in excavation here [*Cf.* Pl. XXIV (b) 5]."

"[3] Kalidasa—Kumar Sam., IX, 23."

"[4] Compare the round ear-ring in the ear of the horseman in Pl. XXI (b) 4."

nandipada, bull and conch-shell, etc. were held in high esteem by Bangarh people. These appear in their sealings and plaques, etc. [Pl. XXII (a) 1, 2, 6 ; XXIV (b) 1, 4-6].

Children also were not ignored by the ancients of Bangarh. Various sorts of toys, *viz.*, miniature pottery, birds and animals, rattles, bird whistles, bird and animal chariots, carts and marbles of terracotta are some of these objects.

The arts and crafts particularly flourished in the age of the fourth stratum. The evidence of goldsmith's craft reaching a very high level of fineness and skilfulness is manifest from the gold pendant. The potter also contributed his share of efficiency in making pottery of fine fabric and finishing it with the glossy black polish [Pl. XXX (60)]. Other cheaper varieties of pottery and colossal jars[1] with thicker fabric also used to be made along with the black pottery. The terracotta art which has found Bengal its favourite home since the dawn of civilisation in this soil, reached the high water mark. Numerous plaques and images, etc. recovered in course of digging are sufficient to bear evidence to this statement.

As regards other minor arts—ivory and bone were used for making comb, awl and some decorative articles. Copper was generally selected for cosmetic sticks, and hard awls. Weapons of war and household implements were made of iron [Pl. XXV (b)]. Countless terracotta missiles of the shape of torpedos were probably used at times for the defence of the city [Pl. XXIII (b) 1-6]. A huge number of this object has been found heaped up from a high level down to a very low one at a place near the rampart or city wall. It may be that one of the city's defensive posts lay in this side.

From the Sunga period the city gradually passed through the Kushan to the Gupta period. Apart from a few terracotta objects no other thing of that period can yet be traced at Bangarh. At least no regular structure can yet be ascribed to that age. The next or the higher or third stratum may be assigned to the Gupta period which is manifest from the find of terracotta and other objects in association with it. The peculiarity of the buildings of this level is that the houses were built of thin walls with roofs of tiles. Another class of massive structure of this period was found in Tr. I. But that was probably meant for some other purpose. Ordinarily the thin rickety variety was more in general use. The special associated objects of this stratum are the tiles of the thatch or roof for the house [Pl. XXIII (b) 7], stamped pottery with the design of lotus and conch-shell, [Pl. XXVII (a)] and the oval shaped round bottomed pottery vases of medium size etc. [Pl. XXVII (b) 2, 4 ; XXVIII, 9, 11]. The fourth and third strata do not show any remarkable evidence of stone work.

On the contrary the second stratum shows a luxurious use of Rajmahal stone for the plastic art in Bengal. Art and

"[1] Fragments of heavy colossal jars of thick fabrics have been discovered from various levels of the fourth stratum."

architecture both claimed their due share in transforming themselves in stone in this period. Along with stone the legitimate share of clay and terracotta was not ignored in this land of terracottas. Stone and terracotta went hand in hand for the art expression in Bengal. Large sized terracotta plaques bearing various figures and depicting the flora and fauna of Bengal were made for the decoration of the walls and façades of the temples and important buildings of the Pala period. Paharpur shows endless varieties of designs in terracotta. Evidences of this art are also forthcoming in a copious number from other parts of Bengal. Instances of this kind are available at Bangarh also. Bricks containing or shaped into various decorative designs have been recovered in a large number from the Pala level [Pl. XXVI (a), (b)]. These were mainly meant for the purpose of architecture. That terracotta was used for making iconic figure also is manifest from the find of the image of *Gaṇeśa* from the second stratum [Pl. XX (1)].

Evidence of pottery is very meagre at this age. Because, natural and human agencies played havoc with them. But from what has still remained, we noticed that colossal or storage pottery was one of the popular objects of that time. The decorative designs on pottery objects used to be incised in this period also. The incised pottery vase with the design of fish, etc. is the living testimony to this statement [Pl. XXII (b) 2]. Now the terracotta toys show a phase of decadence to some extent. And glass takes the place of stone in the case of beads. Shell and glass were used for bangles and some other ornaments. Coin is conspicuous by its absence particularly in the second stratum. But the people used to live in brick houses of finely finished walls with spacious door ways which were provided with stone lintels, sills and jambs. Provision for fixing stone cornice and *āmalaka*, etc., was also made. Halls with stone pillars and pillar bases were the special characteristics of this age at Bangarh. It may be supposed that wood also was used for beam and other building purposes, but due to the moist climate of Bengal its evidence has become scarce

Then we pass on to the first or uppermost stratum which will synchronise with the Muslim period. Of this period, evidences are very few. Being at the top, they have suffered more than anything else. But almost the whole surface except the south western part is strewn over with glazed pottery of blue and green colour. They consist of dish, saucer, tumbler, cup, vase and miniature pottery, etc. These objects were very well burnt and show a very good red colour below the enamel coating. During the early part of the Muslim period also Bangarh did not lose all her importance as may be seen from a variety of beautiful pottery objects, but gradually and slowly she was moving towards decay and finally became the abode of the wild beasts and ferocious animals. The once

prosperous city of Koṭivarsha—the pride of Bengal had to remain unknown and buried for a long time till recently when the pick and the spade under the auspices of the Calcutta University for four seasons have brought only a fringe of her past glory to the notice of the civilised world. Much yet remains to be done to unfold the story of her unrecorded eventful past."

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